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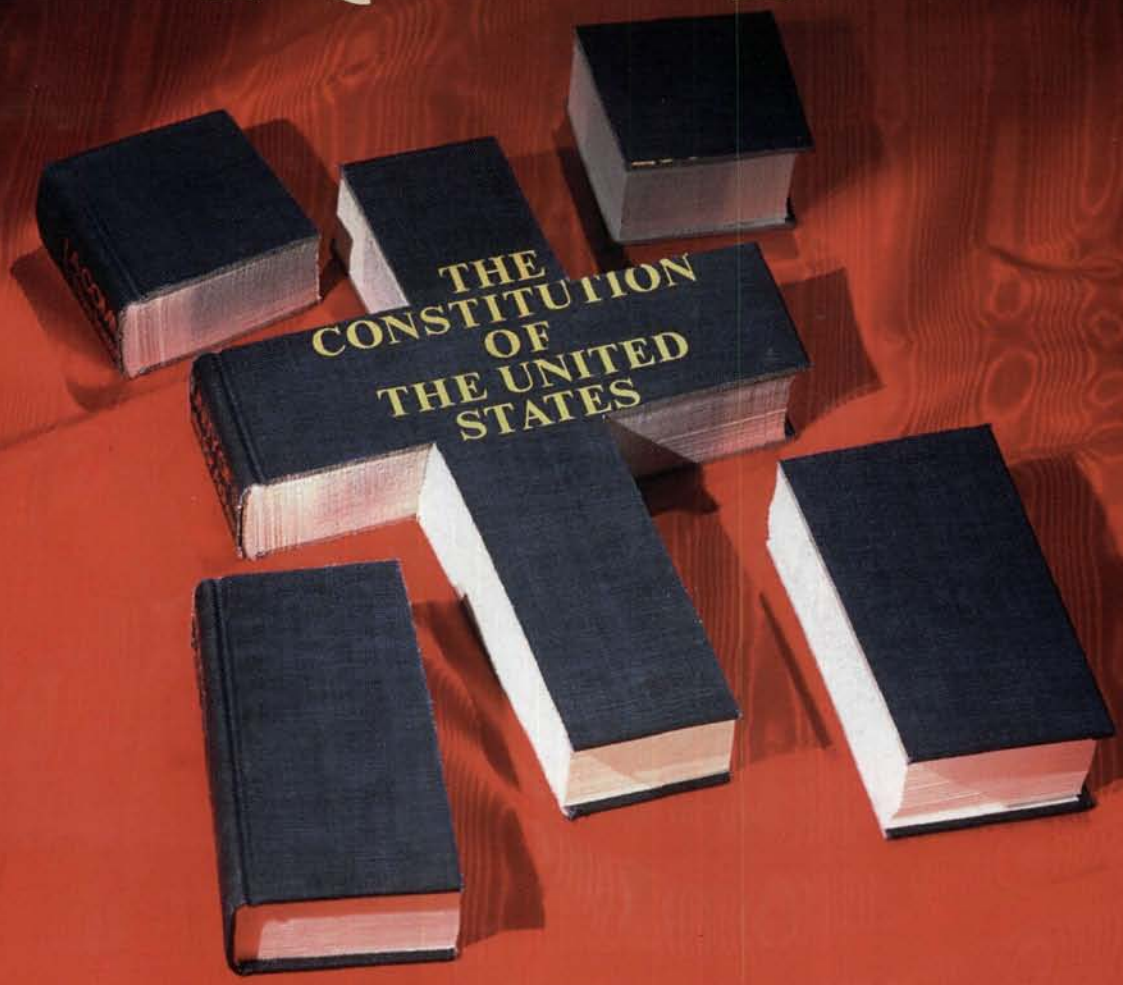

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

A Weekly Journal of Opinion

SEPTEMBER 12, 1994

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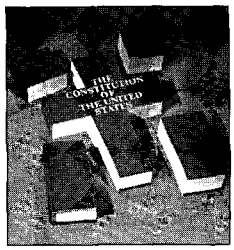

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CORRESPONDENCE

Money for nothing

To the editors:

Your support for replacing the paper dollar with a coin makes you sound like a covert lobby for the silver mining interests ("Noncents," The Editors, August 8). So a big masculine coin would beat that fragile dollar, huh? At any given time, I may have several paper dollars in my wallet. I'd rather have them there, lightweight and mostly unnoticed by myself and others, than a bulging, noisy pocketful of coins that would threaten to drag my pants somewhere below my waist.

You rather ingenuously suggest holding a national referendum to decide whose face would appear on the coin. Do you have any idea how nasty and divisive the resulting brawl would be? Every protected minority, protected minority-wannabe and pompous majority group would be at one another's throat to have its favorite icon on the coin. By the way, don't we already have a dollar coin? Last time I checked, we did, and it already had a face on it.

THOMAS W. DALY
North Mankato, Minnesota

To the editors:

Fortunately your responsibilities are limited to printing magazines instead of the nation's currency. Your advocacy of a new dollar coin omits the crucial fact that the Susan B. Anthony dollar flopped not only because of its size but because Americans overwhelmingly favor the dollar bill. You mentioned the need for a national referendum on the coin; in fact, one has already taken place. In a Yankelovich poll in February, 65 percent opposed eliminating the dollar bill in favor of a coin, and 88 percent of that group felt that the dollar bill is easier to use than a coin. In addition, 71 percent felt that if the coin bill became law, we could expect price increases on items purchased from vending machines, such as food, cigarettes, parking meters and laundromats.

You should also consider the environmental consequences. Paper currency is made from cotton and other linen scraps, and contains no wood products. Coins, on the other hand, contain 92 percent copper. The General Accounting Office estimates that 9 billion coins will be needed to replace the dollar bills in circulation. Since it takes 200 pounds of copper ore to produce one pound of copper, introducing a dollar coin would result in the strip mining of nearly *73 million tons of copper ore.*

KATE LEONARD
Executive Director
Save the Greenback
Washington, D.C.

Heavy shtetl

To the editors:

Isn't it just wonderful to find out what a worry-free life Jeffrey Rosen ("Chilliest Testosterone," Washington Diarist, August 8) and my other young co-religionists of the Northeastern part of the United States live when their greatest worry is "the anxiety of being *plucked* off an elm-lined street and *helplessly* wrapped in the vestments of the seventeenth-century shtetl" (my italics). Were there appropriate laws to prevent the above-mentioned child abuse, Rosen could then live a life of perfect bliss.

DAVID SCHNEIDER
Kfar Vradim, Israel

Number one with a bullet

To the editors:

I was fascinated by Jonathan Stevenson's account of the medical advances brought about in Belfast as a result of the urban terrorism there ("The Best Medicine," August 8), but I was distressed to note that Stevenson still holds to the fiction that the Irish Republican Army is the principal, if not sole, source of violence in Northern Ireland. As various publications have reported in the past year, Protestant paramilitary organizations have outgunned Catholics in recent times. Both sides participate in the senseless slaughter, both are involved in drug dealing and radicals from both are determined to sabotage any movement toward peace. I am sadly sure that the splendid physicians at the Royal Victoria Hospital have had their full share of victims of Catholic *and* Protestant gunmen pass through their wards.

DOUGLAS H. M. CARVER
Great Falls, Virginia

Bum's Rush II

To the editors:

As an avid reader of THE NEW REPUBLIC and an avid listener to the Rush Limbaugh radio talk show, I was disturbed by Joshua Shenk's "Limbaugh's Lies II" (August 8). Not mistakes, differences of opinion or humorous jibes, but *lies*—yet his list of lies seems to be thin gruel, fiercely stirred.

Take the example of Texas Governor Ann Richards. When Richards delivered her famous line about President Bush—"Poor George. He can't help it. He was born with a silver foot in his mouth"—she was not condemned for her *lie*; rather, she was admired for her amusing spoof. Rush, mimicking her, said: "Poor Ma Richards. She can't help it. She was born with a bird nest on her head," and "she was born needing her face ironed." This is on Shenk's *lie* list?

One must hope poor Bill Clinton never finds himself under the severe lens of Shenk's *lies* microscope.

MARGARET BRADLEY
Hunt, Texas

Dewey hooey

To the editors:

Alan Wolfe likes pragmatism, hates postmodernism and hates even more my attempt to examine the similarities and the differences between the two ("The End of Essences," August 8). Because I stand for neither one nor the other, while being intrigued by both, Wolfe charges the book with offering "sloppy methods, bizarre interpretations and puzzling inconsistencies."

One interpretation that drives Wolfe up the wall is my comparing Henry Adams and Friedrich Nietzsche. Wolfe claims that Adams "never developed, like Weber, a systematic account of how history moves," that the pragmatists "possessed a philosophical seriousness that was quite alien to Adams," and that Adams "remains premodern in sensibility and style." Anyone who believes the latter description should read R. P Blackmur's book on Adams; those who doubt his philosophical seriousness should read his quarrels with medieval philosophers in *Mont St.-Michel & Chartres*, the pages of my book where he scrutinizes James's *Principles of Psychology* and the chapter on Peirce, where both the historian and the philosopher turned to Duns Scotus as having anticipated many of the problems in modern philosophy.

The claim that there are no parallel between Nietzsche and Adams and that only Weber developed a "systematic account of how history moves" leads one to wonder whether Wolfe has any idea of what he is talking about. "Weber's view of reality," wrote Albert Salomon "forbade him to adhere to any philosophy of history." Against the romantic Weber insisted that human behavior can be rationally interpreted, but the movement of history itself defies all objective *Sinnzusammehang* ("sense of connections") and its meanings are "inexhaustible." And Adams's sense of the irony of unintended consequences and his belated conviction that in the en

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history as actuality can never be known, that the will cannot will backward, and thus any account of the past that has no access to its object must of necessity be an "interpretation" and most likely "falsified" are all perfect Nietzscheanisms by way of Calvinism.

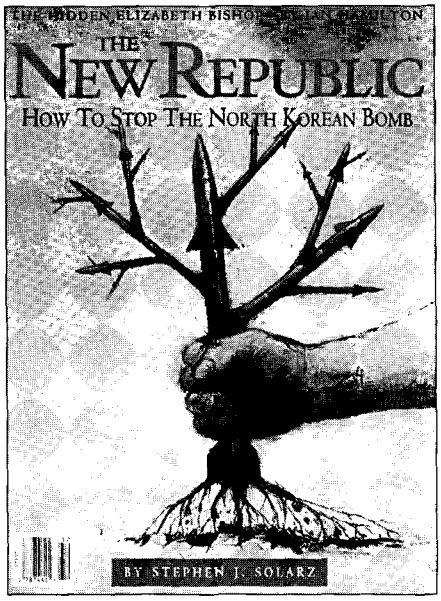
Wolfe charges me with engaging more in "a language game than a history of ideas" because I "play one man's word against another" at the expense of the historical context of author and text. How can Wolfe be so cocksure he knows how intellectual history should be written so that we can confidently situate an author in a conventional context instead of choosing our own possibilities of recontextualizing? Does Dewey, for instance, belong to the New England Brahmins or to the New York intellectuals? Some scholars see Dewey as continuing Congregational piety; others, such as Sidney Hook, saw Dewey dropping religion and never looking back. Wolfe likes his context predictable and settled: Nietzsche's definition of the complacent pedant who encounters the strange and reduces it to the familiar.

What Wolfe seems simply not to get is that Dewey himself undermined any sense that ideas only had validity in respect to their context. If we choose to read Dewey as he told us to read history and thinkers of the past, as phenomena always in transition the potential nature of which can only be known by changing them, then Dewey allows us to modify outdated concepts just as he sought, as he put it, to "find another set of words" to replace Jefferson's belief in natural law and social contract.

Wolfe's charge of sloppiness and inconsistency may be more imposed than perceived. "In a similarly sloppy way, Diggins begins one chapter by claiming that 'Dewey offered the most comprehensive case against authority in modern intellectual history,' only to write, later in the same chapter, that Dewey, although a lover of freedom, 'was no less a philosopher of authority,' citing Dewey's words that 'the need for authority is a constant need of man.' Proofreading is one good defense against postmodernism."

That Dewey could be of two minds about authority completely escapes Wolfe. He thinks a "proofreader" is needed to clear this up. If Wolfe would only read slowly instead of plunging polemically, it might have dawned upon him that Dewey was moving the fount of authority from religion and history to science and methodology. But then, in taking philosophy beyond scientific investigation in order to return it to matters once addressed by religion, Dewey did not see, as did Adams, Peirce, Nietzsche and Weber, that science could not fulfill the role he expected of it. Dewey pulled the foundations out from under authority and then tried to reconstruct it, and hence he "was no less a philosopher of authority" who sought to reduce the arbitrary and control the contingent.

Wolfe would like me to take a position, to hold to one idea and one alone and to stand still on it so that he the reader might be less challenged with ambivalence. At the beginning of the book, Wolfe rightly points out, I am skeptical that pragmatism and post-structuralism can be reconciled, and at the end I emphasize the affinities. Why is it so confusing to Wolfe to suggest that as a cultural affirmation about democracy and science there is no connection whatsoever between pragmatism and



post-structuralism, but as a negation about the promises of philosophy, Dewey, as Rorty was the first to point out, saw how epistemology, metaphysics and other branches of knowledge had become exercises in futility long before Heidegger reached that conclusion?

"Pragmatism was a heroic effort to rescue Enlightenment from skepticism and relativism," and "Dewey's project," Wolfe admonishes the postmodernist, "was to give philosophy a new task, not to abolish it." On the contrary, Dewey himself was skeptical of Enlightenment epistemology and recast the concept of reason as the adaptive idea of intelligence, a biological instrument that contained no truths or fixed set of values. Wouldn't it be more accurate to say that Dewey sought to rescue the Enlightenment from itself, that is, from its own belief in "self-evident" truths and nature's laws, and that he wanted to give philosophy a new mission that would address what he called "the problems of men" rather than the traditional problems of knowledge that had no means of solution; that, in short, he desired to "deconstruct" philosophy as it had once been constructed as a metaphysical quest for certainty and to reconstruct it as a practical instrument to be used for social purposes? In respect to giving philosophy a "new task," there is little difference between Dewey and Rorty, between the sober pragmatist and the outrageous postmodernist. Both having concluded that classical philosophy had come to an "end"—realizing that knowledge could no longer possess its object nor language represent it, and that since knowing itself was more a matter of producing than grasping, philosophy would have a second life in activities that yield effects—Rorty can legitimately look to linguistic innovation just as Dewey had once looked to scientific experimentation. And where do I look? Along with Adams, I'm still looking.

JOHN PATRICK DIGGINS
New York, New York

X-asperated

To the editors:

As a Generation X+1-er, I am acutely aware of the disproportionate emphasis the American culture places upon youth and the ostensible value therein. Still, it is one thing to walk by a newsstand and glance at the near-embryonic body of a prepubescent female draped across the cover of *Vogue* but quite another to turn to TNR's Diarist page and discover references *ad infinitum* to age—but only, it seems, when age falls safely south of mid-thirtysomething. To wit: "We're only 28 years old" (Evan Smith, "Scoop Doggy Dogg," August 15); "In September 1984 ... I was only 13 years old" (Ruth Shalit, "Thin-Thin," April 25); "The school, in which I was incarcerated from age 5 to the age of 17 ... from 1965 to 1978," (Michael Lewis, "Toy Goy," April 26, 1993). You get the picture. By sheer lack of reference to the Brady Bunch and the Partridge Family, I can only conclude that Martin Peretz, Leon Wieseltier and the rest of the gang are chronological decades beyond the new (or is it young?) kids on the block.

SHEILA CAVANAUGH
Boston, Massachusetts

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FROM WASHINGTON

The cure

You knew impressions of Bill Clinton were hardening when Michael Kelly's long-awaited *New York Times Magazine* cover story on the president appeared in late July. Prior to Kelly's piece, the conventional wisdom held that Clinton caves to pressure, tells people what they want to hear, reneges on promises and is unable to tell the whole truth. But Kelly's exhaustive reporting showed ... well, that Clinton tells people what they want to hear, reneges on promises and doesn't tell the whole truth. Two weeks later "Nightline" interviewed people who had voted for Clinton. They called him "weak," a "wimp" and a "pathetic little thing." The way things are going, you almost expect to see Strobe Talbott on "Charlie Rose" confessing that he's distrusted Clinton ever since meeting him at Oxford.

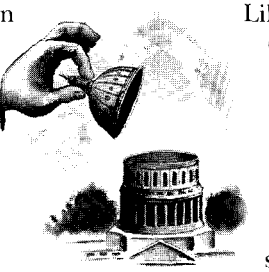
It wasn't until three years into Jimmy Carter's term that a critique of his character had gained such widespread acceptance that it seemed to render further psychoanalysis unnecessary. Clinton has reached that point in less than two years. Now come the desperate "comeback" scenarios. The difference is that Clinton, unlike Carter, still has time to come back. How might he do it?

It's silly to search for a magic bullet that will restore the president's popularity. He already has one, or something close to it: welfare reform. Whenever Clinton has been in trouble in the recent past, he's started talking about his promise to "end welfare as we know it" by imposing a two-year limit on cash aid.

Unlike Clinton's health care plan, his welfare plan is wildly popular. It attracted 90 percent approval in one recent poll. By pushing it through to passage, the president could remind the voters he's no old-style liberal. Perhaps more important, he would show he's no pushover for Democrats who *are* old-style liberals.

Unlike Clinton's crime bill—which was a pollster's vision of neoliberalism, a balance of controversial, but mainly symbolic, steps—a welfare time limit would have a large, measurable impact. Even on crime. What, after all, will make the streets safer: creating fifty-eight new federal death penalties, or shrinking the culture of poverty and broken families that welfare subsidizes?

If I were a Democratic member of Congress, I'd certainly want to vote for welfare reform before November. A few months ago the president seemed to be preserving the option of trying for a welfare bill this year if his top priority, health reform, failed. But health reform is now failing, and Clinton seems to have forgotten his welfare plan exists. No congressional subcommittee has passed it. Daniel Patrick Moynihan, the Senate's designated welfare sage, has done virtually nothing. Even if Clinton suddenly punted on health reform and shifted to welfare, there probably wouldn't be enough time to pass welfare legislation this year.



That's too bad for congressional Democrats, who now will likely face midterm elections with neither health care nor welfare reform to brag about. But it's not necessarily bad for Clinton, and certainly not for his welfare plan, which will get a warmer reception in 1995's more Republican legislature. Certainly, Majority Leader Richard Gephardt won't be able to argue—as he did, inanely, on the crime bill—that the president should water down his proposal in order to pass it without Republican votes. Next year, there won't be enough Democrats left to pass anything without Republican votes. Clinton will have to govern from the center.

So much for substance. What about character? All the bipartisanship in the world won't erase the doubts about Clinton himself. At the equivalent moment in Carter's term, Charles Peters of *The Washington Monthly* wrote that "What we need, Mr. President, . . . is for you to get down on your knees and admit you have sinned." That would be nice. At the very least, Clinton could drop the sort of obvious self-pity—blaming Rush Limbaugh, blaming the "confusion" of voters in "a time of change"—that avoids the need even for introspection.

It is not good news to learn (see "No Excuses" by Fred Barnes, page 9) that the president is enamored of Thomas Patterson's *Out of Order*. Patterson, a professor at Syracuse University, argues that Clinton's presidency has been a historic triumph, but that he is put upon by a lazy, cynical press. Even if Patterson is right, complaining about it won't help Clinton with the voters. As Peters says, they "want presidents to raise themselves up above that."

Nor will it help with the press. It's true that journalists have changed in the ways Patterson describes. They used to just report the facts. Now they feel they have to add "analysis." Lose a big vote in Congress and R.W. "Johnny" Apple will be there on the front page of *The New York Times* the next morning, beating his tomtoms of doom. It's also true that often the press's "analysis" is ironic, cynical commentary rather than in-depth investigative reporting. No correspondent is going to describe, with a straight face, a politician saying that his "crime bill must belong to the American people."

But this cynical trend has been obvious in journalism and the larger culture for a couple of decades now. Like T.V., or the global economy, it isn't going away. A modern politician like Clinton—and certainly a hip, young aide like George Stephanopoulos—is supposed to recognize and adapt to this change, not moan about it like a dinosaur trapped in a tar pit.

How might a politician appeal to journalists who, inevitably, put their "spin" on the news? Not, it turns out, by "spinning" the story himself—certainly not with the grim, defensive spin that has become Stephanopoulos's trademark. A more adaptive strategy would recognize that today's reporters are likely to reward gratuitous honesty. Look at Representative Barney Frank. In 1989 the papers reported that Frank, a Massachusetts Democrat, had hired a gay male prostitute in a "personal capacity." What did Frank do? He freely admitted what hadn't been proved: that he knew the man was still turning tricks while "working" for him! Frank violated the old damage-control rules. But he satisfied the new, cynical rules. If he was *that* honest, maybe he wasn't playing the usual games. Frank was re-elected. Clinton should be so lucky.

A final "comeback" suggestion, regarding Clinton's four outside political consultants: fire them. As any reader of Bob Woodward's *The Agenda* knows these four (James Carville, Paul Begala, Mandy Grunwald and Stanley Greenberg) give questionable advice—e.g., they ignored the anti-deficit boom—and they leak to the press when it isn't taken. Of course, a dramatic, public firing of the consultants is just the sort of ant Beltway stunt the consultants themselves would recommend. Better to quietly tell them to go away. The news will get out soon enough.

MICKEY KAU

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

SEPTEMBER 12, 1994

BAD REACTION

The Clinton administration is promoting a technical fix to the global proliferation and security threat posed by North Korea's nuclear weapons program: trading in that country's homemade graphite reactors for American-style light-water reactors supposedly less capable of making plutonium for nuclear bombs. On August 12 Robert Gallucci, the assistant secretary of state who has been handling the talks with Pyongyang, announced that the United States and South Korea would form a consortium to provide the North with two light-water reactors, at a cost of $2 billion each. "The attitude is, if that's what they want, that's what we'll give them," a senior U.S. official told *The Washington Post.*

We're baffled by the administration's enthusiasm. Light-water reactors are not necessarily any less dangerous than North Korea's existing reactors. According to David Albright, a physicist and nuclear proliferation expert who heads the Institute for Science and International Security in Washington, "You can run a light-water reactor in such a way that it makes just as much plutonium as any reactor the North Koreans now have. If they wanted to take the new reactors, throw out the inspectors and start to make bombs, they could do it in a matter of months."

The North Koreans say they need a replacement reactor for the power generation of electricity. Yet satellite photos of their current reactors show no power lines running to and from the sites—proof that they are not intended for the production of electricity. And if the North Koreans sincerely desire more electrical power, there are more sensible ways to get it than from a light-water reactor. Even a modest-sized nuclear plant requires trained personnel and a sizable, secure electrical grid; it would take billions of dollars and most of a decade to put these in place in North Korea. A modern fossil fuel plant, by contrast, could be in operation—cheaply and safely—in a year or two.

We should stop and think. Here is a signatory of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and member of the International Atomic Energy Agency that has openly violated its commitments under international law. North Korea has removed fuel rods from its nuclear reactors in blatant contravention of its pledges not to do so without inspection. It has lied about the amount of plutonium its existing reactors have produced. It has broken several promises to freeze its nuclear weapons program. What message is sent to other treaty signatories—Libya, Iran and Iraq among them—when the United States responds to such intransigence with an enormous transfer of money and technology? Libya's nuclear weapons program remains at the research stage, but that could change rapidly now that plutonium is seeping out of the former Soviet Union. If Libya gets its hands on fissionable material, international inspectors will want to visit Col. Qaddafi's playhouse. Would the Libyan leader then see this as an opportunity to bargain with the United States for a light-water reactor of his own?

Recent North Korean actions suggest Pyongyang may simply be using the proposed reactor swap to buy time for bomb-making. On August 20 it barred inspectors from two waste sites that could have provided evidence of how much bomb-grade plutonium has already been extracted. "We will never allow the inspection of [the sites] at the expense of our sovereignty [just] to receive light-water reactors," huffed North Korean Foreign Minister Kim Jong Nam. "This is our unshakable will." North Korea may soon argue that the 8,000 fuel rods it removed from a 5-megawatt reactor at Yongbyon must be reprocessed into plutonium to avert a possible radiological accident—a process that will yield enough plutonium for four or five bombs to add to the one or two bombs' worth they already have. The IAEA repeatedly has offered to help the North Koreans store the fuel rods safely. Not surprisingly, the agency has been rebuffed.

The Clinton administration should abandon its plans to peddle safe nuclear reactors. It should tell the North Koreans that unless they agree to full inspections by the next bilateral conference in Geneva on September 24, the United States will break off talks, strengthen its military presence on the Korean peninsula and go to the United Nations for sanctions. Wishful thinking, we should know by now, is no match for North Korean threats and deceit. •

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NOTEBOOK

THE NEW BEARD: Yasir Arafat must be one of the most politically tone-deaf figures in the history of politics. He has appointed a Jew to his Cabinet, which sounds good. He has said, regarding his Jewish Cabinet-member, that "these people are part of us and our relationship is strong." He has also said, "We are like cousins," which sounds better. But the instance of tolerance and reconciliation in the Palestinian government comes in the form of one Rabbi Moshe Hirsh of the Neturei Karta sect in the ultra-Orthodox community. That is, he is a sworn enemy of Zionism whose mission, he believes, is to right the wrong that was created with the creation of the state of Israel, and work for the destruction of the Jewish state, and then quietly await the Messiah's arrival in the state of Palestine. This rabbi burns the Israeli flag annually on Israel's independence day. Perhaps the chairman, who must inhibit the expression of his opinions if he wants the world's support, intends to live vicariously through the rabbi's virulence.

YOU TRADED OUR COW TO A RUSSIAN FOR A HANDFUL OF MAGIC
WHAT ?
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HE SAID I COULD TAKE OUT A GIANT WITH IT. -

GOD IS IN THE DETAILS:

Spiritual renewal flourishes

People seek lessons of universal church

—The Suffolk County *Patriot Ledger*, August 13

Religion influence may be fading

—same paper, same day, same page

(Thanks to R.D. Ruplenas, Weymouth, Massachusetts.)

GO HOME: For seven years the Food and Drug Administration has refused to approve a home HIV test kit. Because it makes testing easier, the home kit would vastly increase the number of HIV-positive people aware of their status and encourage them to take precautions against infecting others. But AIDS activists and testing clinics oppose the home kit (see "Bad Blood" by Hanna Rosin, TNR, June 27), and the FDA has accepted their arguments. Their main claim is that only clinics can provide sufficient counseling to help people deal with their test results; and home test users won't seek that counseling. Hard to believe, but there was actually a glimmer of hope for the home test: on June 22 the FDA held a public hearing, and at that meeting a scientist from the Centers for Disease Control talked up the kit's benefits. It didn't last long, though. In an internal FDA document dated August 8, the scientist reversed her position. "CDC has serious concerns," the document reads, "about the potential for a sudden increase in referrals to already overburdened health clinics if the kits should be used." Translation: the kit should not go on the market because home test users will seek too *much* counseling.

MASTER OF DECEPTION:

"Indeed, such was the mystery surrounding Carlos that he was often credited with terrorist actions that he did not commit, like the killing of eleven Israeli athletes at the 1972 Olympic games in Munich."—*The New York Times*, August 16

"Carlos, a 44-year-old Venezuelan ... was later implicated in the 1972 massacre of eleven Israeli athletes at the Munich Olympics."—*The Wall Street Journal*, same day

(Thanks to Nancy Janes Coombs, Toronto, Canada.)

DUH:

Backward running can help build up seldom-used muscles

—*The Detroit News*, August 20

(Thanks to Donald J. Montgomery, Okemos, Michigan.)

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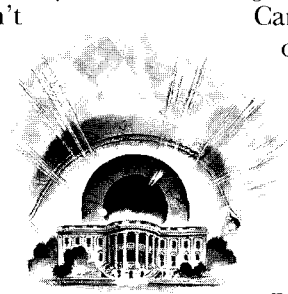
No EXCUSES

By Fred Barnes

Ronald Reagan had a story for every occasion. Bill Clinton has an excuse. Over lunch at the White House in 1985, Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze said he remembered when Soviet-American relations were far friendlier, implying the United States was responsible for their growing apart. Reagan, mildly irritated, said he was reminded of the story about a couple riding in a car. The wife complains to her husband that, after years of marriage, they don't sit close to each other anymore. "I haven't moved," the husband snaps. Clinton thinks he hasn't moved either. At a breakfast with White House T.V. correspondents on August 18, he explained the battered condition of his presidency and his agenda by quoting Al From, head of the Democratic Leadership Council: Americans have 1960s expectations for his presidency, but a 1980s view of government.



Like Reagan's stories, Clinton's alibis have an element of truth. Yes, the public's idea of what the government ought to do is narrow. But it's Clinton, not the American people, who has an overblown vision of what a president should achieve. Still, as excuses go, Clinton's is a classic—shifting the blame for failure in Washington from himself to the public. And if you don't buy it, he has others. It's the press, abusive and unfair, that's gutting his presidency. It's Republicans, unprecedented in their partisanship, who hobble him. It's a national wave of cynicism. It's this moment in history, after the cold war, that makes his job so difficult.

Clinton's aides insist the president believes every excuse (Reagan thought his stories were true, too). Take the one about the press. Clinton told a town meeting in Cranston, Rhode Island, that he's been maligned by the media more than any other president. Later, he pointed to *Out of Order*, the press-bashing book by Professor Thomas Patterson of Syracuse University. Patterson argues the media disdains coverage of serious issues and acts as if the only way to look at politicians is down. He cites coverage of Clinton during the 1992 campaign as notably bad. Clinton loved the book. "He's been touting it for months," says an aide. "It was on his desk."

That's not all. Morton Kondracke of *Roll Call* asked Clinton about the book during a reception in July for Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and King Hussein of Jordan. Clinton said he'd read parts and asked if Kondracke had seen Patterson's new postscript on the press's treatment of Clinton's presidency. Kondracke hadn't, so the president sent him a copy. The postscript suggests Clinton deserves high marks, not zingers, from the media. "Clinton's first-year record is the profile of a president who should have acquired a reputation for fulfilling his promises," writes Patterson. But the press is "hypercritical," with the tone of its coverage dependent less on a president's performance than on "the media's cynical bias." Whitewater, Patterson wrote, is an example of "the press's fault-finding mentality" attaining "gigantic proportions." Clinton's low approval ratings in public opinion polls? Fluctuations in polls "followed changes in the tone of his press coverage."

Much of what Patterson says about the press is correct, at least generically. But so what? Blaming the press is like blaming the weather. It affects everybody and you can't do anything about it. Unflattering press treatment "is part of the air" at the White House, says a Clinton adviser. "It makes it more difficult to govern, but not impossible." Coverage of Clinton, while harsh, isn't much rougher than coverage of George Bush or Jimmy Carter. Clinton's obsession with the unfairness of the press, an obsession rivaling Richard Nixon's, is counterproductive. It casts him as a whiner, whets the media's appetite and keeps him from more satisfying work.

As early as August 1993 Clinton was also blaming extreme partisanship by minority Republicans for his troubles. GOP unity against his budget represents "an incredible partisanship," he told reporters. "I think they think their job is to hurt the Democrats in Congress politically and hurt the president politically." This summer, when the crime bill faltered, Clinton accused the GOP of putting "the protection of partisan and special interest over the protection of ordinary American families." House Republican Whip Newt Gingrich became, in the White House's view, the poster boy of partisanship. Actually, Gingrich, though highly partisan, is no more so than Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell, who bedeviled Bush. In fact, Gingrich engineered Clinton's biggest win in Congress: last November's ratification of the North American Free Trade Agreement. Since then, he's "helped" the White House on foreign policy, a Clinton aide says. "I find him very, very constructive."

Clinton's excuse that the public won't give him a fair shake comes in two forms. One is the notion that we demand great things but won't give the president the tools to achieve them. This is spurious. Clinton ran for president against big government. His programs, he said, would be non-bureaucratic and free-market oriented. The public agreed. In exit polls on Election Day, a vast majority of voters said they preferred lower taxes and fewer government services to higher taxes and more services. But that's not what Clinton has proposed as president. Hence, public disenchantment. Clinton's other beef is that the country is drenched in cynicism. "There is so much accumulated cynicism in this country," he de-

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clared at a Democratic fund-raiser in June. That, he suggested, and not his performance, may cause extra Democratic losses in the midterm election this fall.

More ingenious is Clinton's blaming of history. He compares the current post-cold war era to the periods following the First and Second World Wars. After World War I, Clinton told members of Boys' Nation at the White House in July, "the American people said we do not have any more energy for the problems of the world," and they elected a president who left everyone alone. A surge in Ku Klux Klan activity and a Red scare ensued, he said. "At the end of World War II, the same thing happened, but we had a president named Harry Truman who said we're not going to walk away from our problems at home and we're not going to walk away from our obligations abroad." Naturally, Clinton identifies himself with Truman, who was vilified as "radical, incompetent, unfit to be president, too liberal," just as Clinton is now. What this shows, Clinton said, "is at the end of one time and the beginning of another, when people are used to looking at the world through this set of glasses and then they have them put on another set of glasses, anybody can be confused." I doubt Reagan has a story to top that. •

The quest for American-made sneakers.

SHOE AND TELL

By Sallie Tisdale

I live in Portland, Oregon, where Nike has its corporate headquarters and where the first Niketown store was built, but for the last several years I've worn Reeboks. This winter my Reeboks began to give out. It was time to look for new shoes. I started browsing, picking up one spanking clean, aerodynamically designed sneaker after the other and reading the small labels hidden inside: "Made in China." "Made in Korea." "Made in Indonesia." "Made in Thailand." A few years ago Nike's overseas labor practices were publicized, and the small scandal that followed made it clear that the foreign operations of a number of U.S. shoe companies left a lot to be desired. My Reeboks were made in Korea, and I promised myself that my next pair of athletic shoes would be made in America.

I asked clerks about American-made shoes. The ones who weren't bewildered by my request told me there's no such thing as an American-made court shoe, unless you count Chuck Taylors. So I called Nike, and made my way through voice-mail until I reached a customer service representative. When I told him my problem, he replied that the company was "still manufacturing in Indonesia and a lot of other countries in that area."

"Do you know if any of those factories are unionized?" I asked. There was a short silence.

"I don't know if they *have* unions in Indonesia," he finally said.

"Well, are Nike's domestic employees unionized?"

But he'd grown impatient by then. "We're all management here," he answered. "We don't *need* unions."

I called the headquarters for L.A. Gear in Santa Monica. "I want to talk to someone about how your shoes are manufactured," I told the young woman in customer service. "Are they made in the United States?"

"Made in the U.S.?" She seemed taken aback. Their shoes are made in Brazil and Asia, she said.

When I called Reebok, I identified myself as a journalist, and this time I was transferred to Corporate Public Relations. "All of our shoes are manufactured outside of the United States," a woman told me. I asked her which countries and she didn't know. She did, however, send me Reebok's Human Rights Standards brochure. Artfully designed, done up in red, white and blue, it uses phrases like "appropriate in light of national practices and conditions" to define acceptable wages and working schedules. It took me several more calls to find out the countries in which Reebok manufactures appropriately—China, Thailand, Indonesia, Korea and the Philippines.

Bill Krenn, a public relations manager for K-Swiss shoes, returned my call but stopped me before I could finish my questions. "We do not talk about our manufacturing," he said. "All I can tell you is that we manufacture offshore."

Saucony does manufacture some shoes domestically; the company was, in fact, frequently suggested to me by shoe clerks. But when I called Saucony and identified myself as a journalist, no one would answer questions unless they were submitted in writing.

I went back to stores and looked at labels—in Filas, Adidas, Avias, Etonics. China, Korea, Indonesia, the Philippines. By now, my Reeboks had a hole in them.

Most shoe workers in Southeast Asia are teenagers and young women. They work fifteen- to sixteen-hour days doing endless piece work. (Even Reebok's space-age brochure mentions sixty-hour work weeks as normal.) Many of these women live away from their families in barracks; in some cases they are virtual prisoners, forbidden to leave the factory compound without a pass. The minimum wage in Indonesia is now $1.80 per day. And it's not always enforced.

Jeff Ballinger, a labor lawyer specializing in Asian issues, told me that even Indonesia's minimum wage a sixty hours a week fails to meet the local poverty level. He pointed out that Bata, which makes a variety of cheap shoes largely for the Asian market, pays its workers $3.90 per day—quite a bit more than companies producing for the American market.

The woman I spoke with at Reebok hadn't known how much Asian workers making Reeboks were paid. "We don't own the manufacturing plants," she'd said—common practice. According to Jeff Fielder of the AFI

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CIO, much of this kind of manufacturing is now done through third parties. American companies contract with Asian entrepreneurs, often South Korean, who buy and run the factories producing shoes for the American market. Fielder calls this "exploitation by proxy."

And then I called Nike one more time, as a journalist. I spoke with Keith Peters, the director of public relations. Our conversation was peppered with Peters's long silences. He told me that it wasn't "economically viable" for Nike to make its shoes in the United States. (This is the same company that considered a serious cash bid for Madison Square Garden, the Knicks and Rangers included). Why was Asia a better choice? "Some of it clearly has to do with the cost of labor," Peters said. Then he brightened, remembering the South Koreans. "Nike owns no factories," he noted. "We contract with people," adding that the company demanded workers be paid "at least the minimum wage mandated by law in the country we manufacture in."

"I would like to know how I, as a consumer, can feel good about buying shoes made under conditions that don't meet American human rights standards," I said. "I would like to buy a homegrown product. Can you help me with that?"

"I might point out that there are 2,500 people who work for Nike right here."

"How many people work for Nike overseas?" I asked. Peters didn't know. Nike has only a few hundred actual employees in Asia, he said, many of them in quality control. But on the other side of the middlemen, about 75,000 people make Nike shoes and clothing.

So I called New Balance and talked to Catherine Shepard in the press relations department. She told me that 70 percent of their shoes are made in the United States, at four plants in Massachusetts and Maine; the rest are made in Europe and Asia. New Balance's plants aren't unionized, but all are run on a modular manufacturing plan—meaning no assembly-line piece work. Employees are paid between $10 and $12 per hour, plus bonuses and benefits. "We're working toward being 100 percent U.S. made," she said. Then Shepard told me the bad news. The women's court shoe that would best meet my needs is one of the few made in China. But a men's court shoe might work, she added, since New Balance shoes come in several different widths.

Every time I turn on the television, I see Michael Jordan and Larry Bird, Nancy Kerrigan and Bo Jackson and Charles Barkley—ducking and jumping and running and skating for shoe companies. When I spoke with Keith Peters of Nike, I asked him how much money Nike spends on endorsement contracts.

"That number," he insisted, "is not divulged." It was widely reported that Nike signed Alonzo Mourning to a $16 million contract just last year.

How much does it matter, I wondered, squeaking around the volleyball court in my frayed Reeboks? How easily do principles give way to the pressing need for ankle support? For brand loyalty? For fashion?

Manufacturing in the United States is not economically viable. Can't be done. But New Balance manages to survive, albeit on a scale smaller than Nike. How much would Nike, which had profits of $360 million in 1993, earn if it manufactured shoes here, or simply paid its overseas workers a living wage? Somewhat less, perhaps. But the company would probably stay afloat.

Last week, I bought a pair of New Balance 665s with a little label inside reading "USA." The plain white shoes cost $59.95, and I like the fit. They're comfortable in several different ways.

SALLIE TISDALE is the author of *Talk Dirty to Me: An Intimate Philosophy of Sex* (Doubleday).

Castro isn't going anywhere.

FIDELITY

By Arturo J. Cruz Jr. and Consuelo Cruz Sequeira

Anyone looking toward the Caribbean in the last couple of weeks has had to ask the following about Cuba: Given the demise of Fidel Castro's Soviet benefactors, given the newfound resolve on the part of the United States to thwart his regime, given the vast number of souls willing to throw themselves in the ocean to escape the beleaguered island, is Dr. Castro, president of Cuba, commander in chief of the Revolutionary Armed Forces, first secretary of the Communist Party of Cuba and prime minister of the Cuban Council of Ministers, about to fall? Probably not.

Consider this. To control the boardwalk uprising of August 5, in which anti-Castro protesters clashed with government forces, Castro deployed the police only briefly. He mostly relied on the Blas Roca Brigade, an association of construction workers who normally make their living building houses for the party faithful and hotels for tourists. These hard-hat revolutionaries are analogous to General Manuel Antonio Noriega's Dignity Battalions and to the Sandinistas' Divine Mobs in that they're passionately loyal, they are not in uniform, and instead of firearms, they carry clubs and stones.

The Blas Roca Brigade pacified the boardwalk. How different from the insurrection the previous year at Cojimar, a fishing town ten miles from Havana, the very place where Hemingway was inspired to write *The Old Man and the Sea*. At Cojimar, Castro deployed elite security troops, highly trained soldiers who proved their willingness to shoot at fellow Cubans. (When it was over, there were three dead and many more wounded.) This year, Castro drove to the boardwalk via El Prado Avenue to boast: "We don't need weapons to deal with the lumpen."

In short, the socialist system is in crisis, but the Castro regime is still functional. As the average Cuban puts it,

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"*Se acabó la ideología, solo queda la policía*"—"Ideology is finished. Only the police remain."

But the Castro regime has one additional advantage—the conspirators aim to escape, not to overthrow. In Cuba, the prevailing impulse is to leave, forever. The Cuban rafters—the *balseros*—in Miami have a mantra: "I'm not going back, come what may." A disappointed Latin American revolutionary who has been living in Cuba for twenty years told us that in his opinion "70 percent of the people simply want to go to hell." And a friend who asked a child what he wanted to be when he grew up got the reply, "I want to be a foreigner."

Cubans dedicate their energy either to meeting their basic needs or to planning their flight. For them the perils of the sea are less frightening than plotting against their leader. And Castro knows it. Thus, in the wake of the boardwalk riot, he threatened another Mariel exodus. The threat served a dual purpose. The most obvious one was to unnerve the Clinton administration by transforming the Cuba problem into an immigration nightmare for the United States. But the threat was also seductive: in the coded language Castro shares with his people, he was telling them to be patient, that he's about to let them go, as he did in the 1980s. From all appearances, they believe him. Despite the recent shifts in U.S. immigration policy for Cubans, Castro's subjects are fleeing the island by the thousands.

Finally, there's the question of the Cuban military. Many prominent exiles see the army as one of the regime's vulnerable points. Jorge Mas Canosa, head of the powerful Cuban American Foundation, advocates a tightening of the embargo in the hope of prompting a military coup. Some say that Mas Canosa even envisions Cuban officers recruiting him as the main architect for the post-socialist economy—after which he might campaign for the Cuban presidency, garnering votes with boatloads of consumer goods streaming into Havana's harbor.

Mas Canosa's strategy may prove unrealistic. Recall that in 1989 Castro managed in the brief span of thirty days to incarcerate, put on trial and execute General Arnaldo Ochoa, Cuba's pre-eminent military hero. The Cuban president also liquidated his own most trusted political protégé, Tony de la Guardia, on charges of drug trafficking. And he purged the Ministry of the Interior, where the regime's reformers were embedded. To this end, he threw Minister José Abrahantes in prison (who had been in charge of Castro's personal security detail), where he died of a "heart attack." As of that moment the ministry fell into the hands of military counterintelligence, which is controlled by Raúl Castro, Fidel's youngest brother, and his most trusted allies. Scarce resources are now channeled not to the Interior Ministry but to military counterintelligence, which spies on those who spy on the population. These military shadows are extremely loyal to their *caudillo*. (If Anastazio Somoza had the allegiance of his officers until the very last moment, this is even more the case with Fidel, who is a more charismatic and serious dictator.)

Ideally, Castro, who is pushing 70 and has been in power for thirty-five years, should retire to Galicia in northwestern Spain, his father's homeland, as has been proposed to him by his intimate friend Manuel Fraga, who heads the Galician autonomous government. It also would be ideal if Castro deposited power in the hands of the young party technocrats headed by Carlos Lage, who are eager to launch reforms and to enter into a dialogue with the exile community.

But being a retired dictator abroad is not an alluring prospect. Somoza was massacred in Paraguay soon after he went into exile. The alternative to violent death might be a ridiculous end to a historic life. Castro could wind up like the nineteenth-century tyrant Juan Manuel Rosas, who ran Argentina at will, then left for England in 1852, where he spent many years dressed like a gaucho, herding cattle on the country's gentle, green slopes. Now imagine the graying Castro, dressed in olive green, surveying Galicia in a Soviet jeep.

The Cuban leader need not contemplate either alternative. For starters, economic reform is more politically feasible now than it was in the 1970s. These days Castro only has to worry only about the survival of *fidelismo*; back then he had to defend a much larger ideological project. Economic reform no longer entails political reform. He has opened the tourism industry to foreign investment, and has dollarized the economy. There's also speculation that he's about to legalize peasant markets. While Castro abhors private economic activity—and when it comes to reform in the domestic economy proper he has been "cautiously timid," as one confidential report written for him put it recently—he can still institute a series of partial reforms. These might not spark the economy, but they would allow him to meet the needs of his operatives and allies.

To revive the Cuban economy completely would require the Cuban exiles' entrepreneurial capacity and accumulated capital. In China, the return of overseas Chinese capital to the mainland has been key. Of course, the Cuban exiles could also help by acquiescing to lifting the embargo. The exiles will do neither unless Castro is gone. And Castro will continue to take the embargo as a pretext for the condition of semi-autarky in which he keeps the island. Railing against external economic "aggression," he cuts off Cuba from external political, ideological and cultural currents. In the meantime, he knows the Spaniards will invest in tourism, and that Latin Americans, Canadians and Europeans will come, among other things, to patronize the flourishing prostitution trade. Castro also knows that the same exile community that insists on the embargo will continue to remit to its relatives and friends half a billion dollars a year in hard currency medicine and food, United States policy notwithstanding. And he knows that he can always tolerate another exodus. Then he'll even have the satisfaction of exacerbating the friction between Miami's exile

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Where We Stand

By Albert Shanker, President
American Federation of Teachers

Bridging the Gap

One of our most troubling problems is the large and persistent gap between the achievement of white, middle-class students and that of poor, minority youngsters. This gap puts minority children at a terrible disadvantage. It also threatens the health of our democratic society. There is no dispute about the seriousness of the problem, but there is plenty about how to solve it.

Minority kids often go to schools with poor quality curriculums where little is expected of them. Should we set higher standards and work with these youngsters to help them meet the standards? Or is this another form of unfairness? Is it better to try to bring the youngsters along gradually by offering them a curriculum that doesn't expect too much of them?

We must be sure that we don't repeat the mistake of 70 years ago and confuse being easy with being fair.

In "High Standards for All" (*American Educator*, Summer 1994), Jeffrey Mirel and David Angus reveal that this debate on how to achieve equity in education is nothing new—it goes back at least 70 years. More important, they present evidence that minority youngsters are *not* turned off by high standards. When more is demanded of them, they produce more. Standards, Mirel and Angus say, are the most powerful lever we have to achieve equity in education.

Early in the 20th century, when large numbers of youngsters from white working-class and minority families began staying in school past the elementary grades, educators were somewhat uneasy. They believed equity demanded that they "educate" these youngsters—which meant keeping them in school until they got their diplomas. But educators had serious doubts about the youngsters' ability to master an academic curriculum—what we would now call a core curriculum—of English, history, mathematics, science and foreign languages. If the kids were pushed into these courses, educators believed, they would drop out in huge numbers.

Their solution was to differentiate and dilute the curriculum. And the result can be clearly seen in the high school course-taking patterns that Mirel and Angus follow over a 60-year period, from 1928 to 1990. The number of different courses that were offered skyrocketed from about 175 in 1922 to 2,100 in 1973—as Mirel and Angus say, "curricular expansion run amok." At the same time, the percentage of academic or core courses went steadily downward. In 1928, over 67 percent of the courses taken were academic; by 1961, the number had dropped to 57 percent.

The impact on working-class and minority children was particularly significant:

> While these curricular decisions sought to promote equal educational opportunity, in reality they had a grossly *un*equal impact on working-class and black children .... Beginning in the 1930s, these students were disproportionately assigned to non-academic tracks and courses and to academic classes that had lower standards and less rigorous content.

However, that's not the end of the story. Thanks to various reform initiatives, course-taking patterns began to change direction again in the 1970s. Students started taking more academic courses, and the percentage of academic courses has risen steadily until it is now over 66 percent—close to the 1928 high. Minorities have shared in this increase in academic course taking, and it has led to some remarkable changes for African-American and Hispanic students, both in terms of the percentage of academic courses taken and improved achievement, as shown in standardized tests.

For example, in 1982 only 28 percent of African-American students took four years of English, three years of social studies and two years of math and science. By 1990, 72 percent were taking these core courses. Did this increase in the academic course work lead to a big increase in dropouts? Not at all. In fact, the dropout rate for African-American students fell from 18 percent to 13 percent. And SAT scores for these youngsters rose 21 points on the verbal section and 34 points on the math.

The gap that remains between black and Hispanic students and white students is enormous and unacceptable, but the way to close it is to ask more of minority youngsters, not less. Students will not all be able to learn exactly the same material in exactly the same way—though these differences have nothing to do with racial or ethnic background: "The idea that all students should meet high standards (and essentially follow the same curriculum) does not deny that there are educationally relevant differences among individuals in interests and abilities."

Goals 2000 offers states and communities a chance to develop standards and curriculums and assessments that take individual differences in "interests and abilities" into account while pushing all youngsters to achieve their best. As Mirel and Angus warn us, we must be sure that we don't repeat the mistake of 70 years ago and confuse being easy with being fair.

For a copy of the article, write AFT, "High Standards," at the address given below.

Mr. Shanker's comments appear in this ad under the auspices of the American Federation of Teachers. Reader correspondence is invited. Address your letters to Mr. Shanker at the AFT, 555 New Jersey Avenue, N.W. Washington, D.C. 20001. © 1994 by Albert Shanker.

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community and the rest of American society.

Fidel Castro, then, is likely to stay. The Cuban leader does not want a face-saving escape route; he wants to die in his bed in Havana. He is even resigned to a rather distant vindication by history; he recently stated that a proper assessment of his achievements will take 1,000 years. Let's hope he'll be gone before then.

ARTURO J. CRUZ JR. teaches at the Central American Institute for Business Administration in Managua. CONSUELO CRUZ SEQUEIRA is a Visiting Fellow at Princeton University's Center of International Studies.

Meet Italy's loathsome leader.

PHONY BERLUSCONI

By Mark Lilla

When Silvio Berlusconi became prime minister of Italy in April after forming a coalition with members of an ex-fascist party, U.S. newspapers reported that the rightist threat sweeping Europe had finally crossed the Italian border. Conservative journalists in America have recently punctured this myth, only to erect another: Berlusconi is the leader of a Reaganite, anti-government revolution. While conservatives are correct that Italians want a more liberalized state, they do not understand that the fundamental issue is not market liberalism but legal liberalism—the most basic rule of law that is the necessary precondition of any freedom in politics and economics. In Italy, this distinction is critical.

After the Second World War Italy in many respects became a liberal society like others in Western Europe. The economy slowly modernized and spread affluence more widely, and the level of education rose. In turn, the authority of the church and family declined, making young people more independent and cosmopolitan. The Italian state, by contrast, remained profoundly illiberal. It was large, overweaning and weak. And it lacked an independent civil service or legal system. While these institutions were imposed on Germany by the occupying powers after the war, Italy was left to its own devices; as a result, nineteenth-century habits were transmitted to the postwar world through the medium of the fascist state.

For forty-odd years, as the economy and society modernized, the state was little more than a tool used to keep the ruling parties in power. The corruption scandals that dominate today's headlines are the inevitable result of this state-supported oligarchy. But these alone do not explain the rise of Berlusconi. The small, everyday corruptions of law and procedure were what frustrated Italian citizens most. Courts and government agencies were slow and arbitrary unless one had a friend in them. No one could get a roll of stamps, it seemed, without *una raccomandazione.* Many people were making money, but only by manipulating the law.

Frustration with arbitrary rule, which has fueled more than one revolution in history, lies at the heart of Italian political passions today. The question is who will exploit these passions—and to what end? The most recent, and most unlikely, beneficiary of this frustration is the suave plutocrat Berlusconi. His Italian enemies compare him to Ross Perot, but this misses his real significance. While Perot represents a traditional form of American cultural resentment, Berlusconi radiates a sleek new optimism virtually absent from Italian politics; it has earned him the admiring sobriquet *il Cavaliere* (the Knight). With his upbeat, if simple-minded, picture of the Italian future, he embodies the Italian economic and social revolution, and now promises to extend it to the state. However mistaken the Italians' trust in him, it speaks to their frustration with the contradiction between the state and society that has made Italian public life a sewer.

The problem is that Berlusconi has no intention of resolving the contradiction. He *is* the contradiction. His corporation, Fininvest, which dominates the worlds of private television, publishing, retailing and even soccer, could not have succeeded without the help of his close friend Bettino Craxi, the former Socialist Party leader now hiding out in Tunisia, a fugitive from Italian justice. Craxi was instrumental in "liberalizing" the communications market while leaving it virtually unregulated, thus permitting Berlusconi to build a web of T.V. stations, newspapers and magazines that would be illegal in most other modern countries. Berlusconi was also involved in "P-2," the secret masonic society that once included the country's most important businessmen, politicians, generals and even Vatican officials. P-2 has been directly linked to various banking scandals and indirectly to a host of other illegal activities in and out of government. And we are learning through the Tangentopoli investigations just how much of Fininvest's real estate business depended on the public-private ties Berlusconi now campaigns against.

Seldom has a wolf been so improbably attired in lambswool—yet so desperate are the Italians for clean government that they persuaded themselves Berlusconi would deliver it. They were quickly disabused. The new prime minister immediately filled his Cabinet with officials from Fininvest or from the old Craxi regime, and within weeks he tried to gain more direct control over the public T.V. stations. (He was blocked by Italian President Oscar Luigi Scalfaro.) All this might have been forgiven had he not mounted a foolhardy assault on the Tangentopoli magistrates. Emboldened by the pomp of the G-7 meeting in Naples, an apparent public wearines with the slow Tangentopoli trials and the surprise successes of the Italian World Cup team, Berlusconi believed the time ripe to strike. While his countrymen were watching the soccer matches, Berlusconi freed roughly 2,000 suspects placed in preventive detention

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and imposed strict controls on press reports of corruption investigations. By moving quickly to end Tangentopoli, Berlusconi hoped to leave the populace "both satisfied and stupefied," as Machiavelli once counseled.

He miscalculated badly. Not least, he underestimated the cleverness of the Milan investigators, who proved more attentive students of Machiavelli. Their most prominent magistrate, Antonio Di Pietro, called a press conference after the suspects were freed to announce the abandonment of Tangentopoli. Speaking solemnly, he concluded by looking up at the camera and whispering, "Please excuse my tone of voice. I'm all choked up." That was enough to return Italian public opinion temporarily to its senses. Demonstrations against the decree began the next day and faxes rained down on government offices and news bureaus, denouncing the move and begging Di Pietro to stay. When Berlusconi's partners threatened to quit the coalition over the issue, he was forced to retreat, though at this writing the ex-detainees still remain free. Once the decree was officially dead the magistrates went on the offensive, placing Berlusconi's brother and two business associates under house arrest for bribing treasury officials—charges that were probably prepared in advance to meet the expected Berlusconi assault.

The battle between Berlusconi and Di Pietro is not being fought by the standard rules of liberal democracy. But whether Italy becomes truly liberal may well depend on whose temporary state of emergency is imposed—Di Pietro's or Berlusconi's. Berlusconi has cynically appealed to legal procedure, talking of "ordinary citizens" needing protection from the magistrates, whose relative autonomy from the court system and the police he would like to end. (He even offered Di Pietro a ministry in the hopes of silencing him.) It is true that suspects have languished up to eight months in jail without trial, usually due to court delays, and that the magistrates have used this threat to extract information from frightened businessmen and their families. Amnesty International and U.S. officials have protested this practice as a violation of human rights. But those who care about the future of liberalism and human rights in Italy can only hope that the practice continues, at least until the principle of law can be established properly.

The best outcome, of course, would be the victory of a new majority committed to calling a constitutional convention to reform the basic structures of the state. But until a single party or coalition can offer the reforms Italians' desire, the so-called Second Republic is more likely to be the scene of a struggle, at times dirty, between the powerful representatives of the old regime and the brave but uncontrolled magistrates. In Italy, as in the ex-Soviet bloc, second-best solutions may be the only ones available to combat officially-sanctioned lawlessness. The need to distinguish between the friends and enemies of liberal democracy did not cease with the end of the cold war. It just got harder.

MARK LILLA is associate director of the Institute for Advanced European Studies at New York University.

Europe's Communists return.

RED AGAIN

By Charles Lane

HOYERSWERDA, GERMANY

In June, Horst-Dieter Brähmig was elected mayor of this dreary town (pop. 62,000) near the German-Polish border. The buoyant scion of a prominent local family, Brähmig, 55, won on a pledge to revitalize Hoyerswerda, which grew up as a Stalinoid center of mines and factories in the old German Democratic Republic (GDR) but is now in a state of economic collapse. Brähmig's platform was Clintonesque: populism (attacks on unemployment and privatized housing) plus calls for personal responsibility (private-sector investment and a crackdown on Skinheads and criminals). "We must be given the chance to build up ourselves with our own energy and our own means," he told me. Brähmig, who got 52 percent of the vote, would seem to be living proof that a new political culture is taking hold in the former East Germany. There's only one catch: Brähmig is, and always has been, a Communist. And he probably won because of that affiliation, not despite it.

To the horror of Germany's political establishment and much of the nation's public, the Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS), the renamed and semireconstructed successor to Erich Honecker's old Socialist Unity (Communist) Party, has re-emerged as a major political force in the former East Germany. During recent elections for the European Parliament and local governments, the PDS polled more than 25 percent in some nineteen cities and counties—including 40 percent of East Berlin's vote for European Parliament. In the state of Saxony-Anhalt, the PDS won 19.9 percent of the vote; the Social Democrats, who finished first, were able to form a government only because the PDS agreed to abstain on confidence votes in the state legislature. The October 16 nationwide parliamentary election could propel the PDS into a new position as the East German regional representative in national politics.

Such reconstituted Communists are a significant factor in national politics across Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. In Serbia, the Communists simply recast themselves as fervent nationalists and remained in power. Bulgarian, Russian and Ukrainian Communists do not rule, but they hold key chunks of parliament. In elections last May, Hungary returned former Communists to outright control of the government, just as Poland and Lithuania had done in 1993.

Why are reformed Communists winning? Not be-

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cause the people of Eastern Europe want to live under communism again. Rather, the parties' victories are largely a backlash against the economic pain of switching to a free market. They win by appealing to voters' hopes that there is some way to "humanize" capitalism, or to preserve parts of the old system that "protected the weak." Social democracy is, roughly, their proclaimed ideology—though in power they generally don't change pro-business, pro-Western policies.

Economics, however, is not the whole story. In some countries, the reformed Communists campaign against conservative social policies: in Poland they made hay charging that the Catholic Church was growing too influential; in united Germany, the PDS has attacked the elimination of abortion on demand, which used to be the norm in the GDR. The top reformed Communists are often savvy, even talented, pols who were associated with "reformist" tendencies before the 1989 revolution: they're opportunists, not hacks. Gyula Horn, the new prime minister of Hungary, allegedly helped suppress the 1956 revolt against Soviet control. But by 1989, when he had become Hungary's last Communist foreign minister, he made the crucial decision to let East Germans escape via Hungarian territory. Since his return to power, he has brought the middle-of-the-road Liberal Party into his Cabinet and accelerated market reforms.

The PDS example is sui generis, since East Germany, unlike Hungary and Poland, did not have to fend for itself after the end of communism. Still, the East German case may be the exception that proves the rule. This is one place where money and freedom should have buried communism once and for all. It thus illustrates some of the deeper causes of reformed Communist success at the polls. The phenomenon is a sign of how far the political development of the East has come, inasmuch as erstwhile Communists have conceded the efficacy of the market and adopted democratic political methods. Yet at the same time it is a measure of unfinished development, in both organizational and psychological terms. For the reformed Communists capitalize on enduring deficiencies in civil society that their forerunners themselves did so much to create.

Five years after East Germany merged with a democracy that had both a stable two-party system and a ready-made cadre of political leaders (and hacks), the PDS still has 130,000 card-carrying members (95 percent of whom were Communist Party members during the GDR). That is five times more members than the Social Democrats, the second-largest party in the former GDR, can claim. The pattern is typical; in Eastern Europe, reconstituted Communist parties are still the largest and best organized. Old structures (and bank accounts) have been preserved and reactivated.

In Hoyerswerda, it is as if the Communists never really fell from grace. They control the local Red Cross, women's center and sports clubs. Just as they ran the local economy in the GDR, former party members and former officers of the National People's Army run insurance firms, travel agencies and real estate brokerages today. These local notables formed a pool of talent and money for the Brähmig campaign. And PDS voters are motivated, which magnifies their importance when turnout is low, as it often is in the former GDR. According to a survey by the Free University of Berlin, about 29 percent of all PDS voters in former East Germany have "a strong interest" in politics, compared with only 13 percent of those who voted for the Christian Democrats and Social Democrats.

With few realistic chances (until now) of gaining spots in the national government, PDS members focused on local issues and offices. As a city council member, Brähmig had gotten a bright new municipal office building built—no small feat in a place known for drab, decaying socialist architecture. He could thus campaign for mayor on nuts-and-bolts issues, charging that "Western" parties, run from the Rhineland capital of Bonn, are too remote to recognize such quotidian needs. "We haven't got a swimming pool in this town," said ice cream vendor Regina Orivol, 47, explaining her Brähmig vote. "Our children have to go a long way just to swim." Concedes Werner Hoyer, secretary-general of the Free Democratic Party, the junior partner in the Bonn government coalition: "The PDS is the only party in East Germany that attacks the everyday problems of the losers from reunification. The traditional parties are allowing them to play this game much too easily."

It is widely known in Hoyerswerda that Brähmig tried to join the Social Democrats after the Berlin Wall fell, yet they would only admit him on six months' probation. Indignant, Brähmig joined the PDS instead. This is an emblematic biography to many East Germans. According to the Free University study, PDS voters are five to six times more likely than others to complain of "disadvantaging" of former GDR citizens. Their whole familiar hierarchy, based on ideological and political credentials, was overturned by new economic and political standards imported from the West. Many felt it was fair enough to purge Stasi informers but arbitrary to lay off workers for low productivity—or to devalue the diplomas of, say, Marxist social scientists.

The recent surge of economic growth in East Germany may heighten, rather than ease, this form of bitterness: losers feel even more like losers when neighbors start to do well. "Not everything was bad back then," PDS voters (and other Easterners) mutter defensively. What they mean is: not *everyone* was bad then—even if the GDR was a cruel, inefficient dictatorship whose citizens mostly went along to get along. The PDS, which of course is made up of collaborators (and worse) itself, says that voters are right to place a chip on their shoulders. "In the PDS everyone can be who they are," says Claudia Nier, a pro-PDS independent who sits on the borough council in Pankow, a part of the former East Berlin. "You don't need to lie about your experiences."

Germany's ruling conservatives are not engaging in

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much soul-searching over why a sizable minority of Easterners seems so disaffected. The rise of the PDS is a boon to their own election campaign. Some right-wing members of Chancellor Helmut Kohl's coalition have even suggested that the PDS should be put under official surveillance as an "anti-constitutional" group. The Social Democrats' decision to form a PDS-dependent minority government in Saxony-Anhalt has also played into conservative hands.

Anti-communism works as an issue in the West, but officials of Kohl's party in the East say that PDS-bashing backfires in their part of the country. The PDS gleefully points out that many conservative cadres in the East used to belong to the GDR wing of the Christian Democrats, a so-called *bloc-partei* that actively collaborated with the old regime.

The PDS also knows how to exploit attention, even negative attention, because its politicians include some of the few in Germany who don't take themselves too seriously. Chairman Gregor Gysi is a master entertainer, a fixture on talk shows. The party press spokesman, Hanno Harnisch, is a former East German radio personality who favors earrings and T-shirts, fights stress by bashing a red punching bag set up on his desk and sports a red baseball cap emblazoned "What's Left?" atop his mane of gray hair. He can out-sound-bite anyone in the two major parties. Recently I watched him reduce a German T.V. news crew to giggles by mugging for the camera in his cap, begging conservatives, "Please, keep attacking us!"

By all rights, the PDS should not have much of a future in Germany. Its membership is aging (only 7 percent are younger than 35). Its basic message is a backward-looking attack on reunification that should lose appeal as the transitional period fades into memory. Two core constituencies—Honeckerites-turned-businessmen, and self-pitying victims of market forces—have divergent interests. The PDS's call to restore subsidized cradle-to-grave security doesn't include a credible plan to pay for it. The PDS party line on the GDR—"a failed attempt at a worthy ideal," members say, in eerie unison—is morally obtuse.

The rise of the PDS is the latest chapter in Germany's (and Europe's) incomplete disentanglement from the authoritarian past. One lesson is that the East bloc constituted a self-contained, distinct—if perverse—constellation of values, in which resistance only sometimes prevailed over accommodation and passivity. But for other parties to transform such attitudes will be delicate, partly because they made their own compromising adaptations to Communist rule in the past, and partly because that would involve morally challenging many who know deep down that their passivity was a source of strength for the dictatorship. Thus a vote for the reformed Communists is, to a certain extent, a vote for moral escapism. Reformed Communists understand, and exploit, this mentality. Which should come as no surprise, since they helped shape it in the first place. •

Christian conservatism's losing record.

DEAD WRONG

By David Frum

This summer's spasm of worry and indignation about the resurgence of the Christian right ought to provoke an awkward question: If the Christian right is so powerful and well-organized, why does it nearly always lose?

Sure, Christian conservatives score the occasional electoral success, winning school board seats, assembly races, local Republican party chairmanships. But when they venture into bigger races, they get clobbered. The Rev. Pat Robertson dropped out of the 1988 Republican presidential contest after finishing fourth in God-fearing South Carolina. The 1993 Republican landslide in Virginia failed to sweep home-schooler Mike Farris into the lieutenant governorship. Even Oliver North—who draws strength from non-evangelicals, too—is stumbling along at 29 percent in this year's U.S. Senate race.

The Christian right has not done much better wielding power indirectly. Has there been a network news report sympathetic to its point of view? What large corporation worries about its image in the evangelical community? How many senators and governors regard the religious right as anything more than a nuisance to be managed?

You don't read this version of events in the papers because Christian conservatives and their detractors share an interest in hyping the movement's power. How else could People for the American Way scare up donors? It would be wiser, though, to take a more cold-eyed reading of the Christian right's flurry of publicity. To cast your eye down the roster of the movement's core issues is to survey a long series of defeats.

Separation of church and state. Six Reagan-Bush Supreme Court justices later, the establishment clause stands exactly as it did at the apogee of Warren Court liberalism. Baby Jesus and the farm animals must still keep off the courthouse square at Christmas. Students may not pray out loud in class; nor may Bibles be displayed. In 1992 the Rehnquist Court went a step beyond even the Warren Court and ruled that a non-sectarian invocation by a Reform rabbi at a high school graduation violated the First Amendment. In fact, in the fifteen years since the founding of the Moral Majority, Christian conservatives have managed to poke only one brick out of the wall separating church and state: a 1984 opinion by Warren Burger permitted Christmas crèches on public property so long as they were accompanied by Frosty the Snowman or other secular seasonal symbols.

Curricula. School systems notoriously ignore parents'

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wishes, but few parents have suffered so complete a dismissal as Christian conservatives. The demand for school choice—seen by some secular liberals as yet another offensive in the Christian right's assault on the Constitution—actually reflects evangelicals' despair that the schools they help pay for will ever heed their wishes. Attempts to introduce "creation science" alongside evolution in science classes were squelched by the Reaganized Supreme Court in 1987. Meanwhile, at the state level, education reformers have pushed schools to devote more energy to teaching science, including evolutionary biology. Publishers, leery of getting caught in denominational crossfires, have expunged references to religion from their history textbooks. Comparative religion classes, which many districts substituted for Bible-reading in the '60s and '70s, skip by Martin Luther and John Wesley on their way to the wisdom of the Hopi.

Christian conservatives do sometimes score an educational point: witness the shooting down of New York state's pro-gay Rainbow Curriculum. But how impressive was that victory really? If a curricular innovation is also opposed by Roman Catholics and observant Jews, and if it goes so far that it makes even secular conservatives queasy, and if it also happens to reflect black nationalism at its most chauvinist, and if large sectors of the electorate are already annoyed at the schools' chancellor for bungling an asbestos cleanup—why, then, you can chalk up yet another big win for those fearsome Christians.

Obscenity. Not so very long ago, it used to be difficult to watch a dirty movie in America. Now pay-per-view T.V. beams them into every rumpus room and business hotel. How free is the sort of speech disliked by the Christian right? Three years ago the country was riven by a controversy over the National Endowment for the Arts: Should taxpayers have to pay naked women to smear themselves with chocolate? Should a crucifix submerged in urine collect government money when no other crucifix could? The answer to both questions: Yes. All the NEA artists blackballed by the Bush administration have jumped back on the public payroll. If the Christian right couldn't win that one, it can't win anything.

Abortion. After twenty-one years of the bitterest ideological struggle, perhaps, since slavery, abortion retains its status as a constitutionally guaranteed right—a right reaffirmed twice by the Reagan-era Supreme Court, in its *Webster* and *Casey* decisions. It's early yet to declare a winner, but certainly the pro-choice side is way ahead on points: though it is indisputably tougher to obtain an abortion in America today than in 1977, 1.5 million are still performed every year. Attacks on abortion doctors and clinics only confirm the triumph of the pro-choice cause. Supporters of legalized abortion shun violence because they know they're winning; like the student radicals of the early 1970s, pro-life fanatics turn to violence because they sense they are losing.

Gay Rights. When Anita Bryant of orange juice fame launched her jeremiad against homosexuality in the mid-1970s, conservative evangelicals appeared to have discovered the perfect issue. Here was a tiny minority living in ways that the overwhelming majority had in those days been raised to recoil from. Here, if anywhere, the Christian right should have been able to rally Americans to roll back the advance of sexual modernism. Instead, the transformation of the legal and social status of homosexuality over the following years brutally exposed the weakness of Christian social conservatism. The ACLU counts more than 100 jurisdictions, ranging from the state of California to the town of Yellow Springs, Ohio, that have extended legal protection to homosexuality or gay domestic partnerships since 1977.

It's not surprising that a moral revaluation of this magnitude should have provoked opposition. What's surprising is how spotty the opposition has been. Conservatives eked out a compromise on the gays in the military fight and carried a Colorado referendum on gay rights—a referendum that now looks unlikely to survive judicial review. But in many other places, steadily and surely, the gay rights cause is carrying the day.

Christian conservatives often react with hostility to bad news, even when they hear it from their friends. Good populists, they confuse the observation that they *are* losing with the opinion that they *ought* to lose. And they usually reply to bad news by citing polling data that indicate substantial public support for their positions.

In this, however, Christian conservatives are again betrayed by their populism. It's one thing for the general public to entertain a belief; quite another to turn that belief into law. American politics is a far more elitist business than most of us are comfortable admitting. In the long months between elections, public policy is made by bureaucracies, legislatures and courts. Public opinion is like the atomic bomb in international relations: useful when it comes time for the ultimate showdown but not terribly relevant to ordinary decision-making. More important than the ability to pack a nomination meeting in Amarillo is the ability to sway the media, to attract support in the academic world, to lobby congressional staffers, to write a solid legal brief.

To do those things requires skills that Christian conservatives generally lack. Perhaps because the theological liberals scooped up the best divinity schools and richest congregations in the great schism of the early twentieth century, or perhaps because contemporary evangelicalism puts so much emphasis on emotion rather than doctrine, the evangelical church is a decapitated institution. It fulfills the spiritual yearnings of millions, but it has trouble justifying itself to scoffers and doubters. Henry Ward Beecher, the great midnineteenth-century evangelist, commanded the attention even of his antagonists. Pat Robertson doesn't.

In the past, Christian conservatives have compensated for their lack of sophistication by accepting the leadership of secular politicians such as Ronald Reagan. It is understandable that many of them have come to reject that strategy: once elected, their allies often turn out to care more about tort reform than godliness. But because they lack effective leadership of their own, breaking

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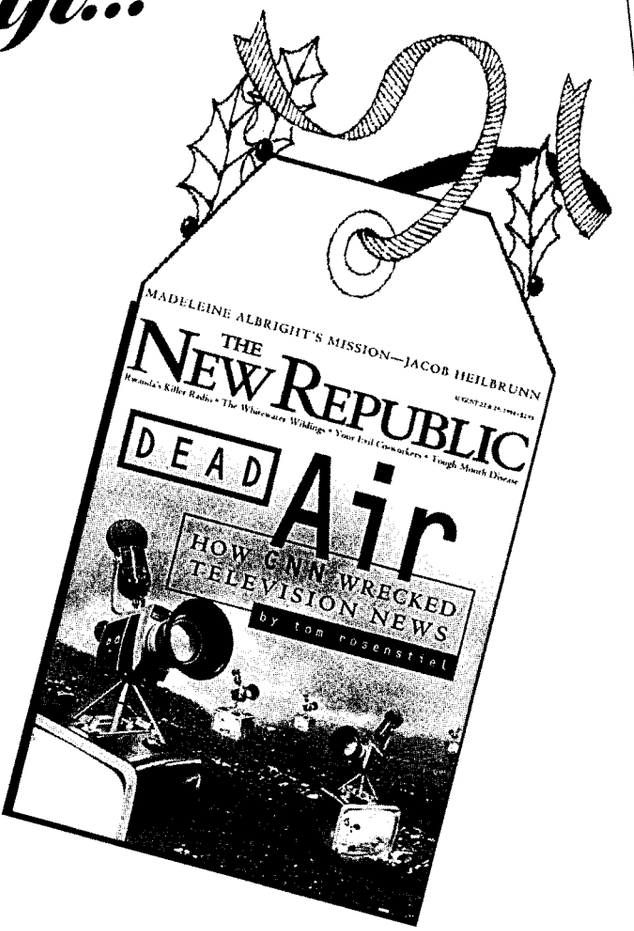

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ranks with secular conservatives either leaves Christian conservatives marshaled behind evangelical enthusiasts who alienate non-evangelicals (like Farris) or vulnerable to cunning outsiders with agendas of their own (like North). Which is why, by the end of the '94 electoral cycle, we're going to cease to read so much about the Christian right: those who compose it will have returned, if unhappily, to their old position as auxiliaries of the Republican Party and secular conservatism.

DAVID FRUM is the author of *Dead Right* (A New Republic Book/BasicBooks).

Fake Wobegon

> The Scandinavians, as stanchly anti-liquor and anti-slavery as the New Englanders, went Republican.
> —Theodore C. Blegen, *Minnesota: A History of the State* (1963)

Minnesotans like to believe that they're the most gentle, pure-hearted citizens in America. Yet people who move here are often appalled by how this veneer of geniality (or "Minnesota nice," as the natives call it) masks a deep, paranoid distrust of interlopers. This is especially true of state politics. We like to think we run an uncorrupt game—as if the Capitol were a casino where the odds favor the electorate, not the house. We believe that our politicians are as untainted as a quiescent inland lake. But our stubborn pride in our elected officials is exactly the kind of blind spot that gets us labeled rubes by the Eastern intelligentsia.

Take Republican gubernatorial candidate Allen Quist, a droopy, rural pol who looks like a cross between Peter Lorre and Jack Benny. Quist has gotten a lot of political mileage out of portraying himself as a humble, Scandinavian farmer who lovingly tills the land that his ancestors settled in the 1850s. He believes he is a clear-thinking, common-sense politician in an age gone mad. Everyone's got a story about what a regular guy Quist is, but one stands out: in 1986, after his first wife was killed in a car crash while she was pregnant with their tenth child, he had the fetus removed and placed in his wife's arms in the casket to bring the grieving process full circle.

Maybe it's just a coincidence, but Quist—then beginning his third term as a state legislator—lost his bid for re-election in 1988. When he tried to regain the seat in 1990, he lost again. Today, Quist's ascent to the apex of the state GOP is viewed in apocalyptic terms by his enemies and allies alike. While critics fret that the end of the world is at hand, his ardent fans—or "Quistians," as they've been dubbed—view it as a political day of reckoning for heathens of every stripe.

Although Minnesota's GOP changed its name in 1975 to the Independent Republican (I.R.) party to put some distance between itself and the shame of Richard Nixon, the same crowd now has no trouble embarrassing itself. When the I.R. endorsed Quist and rejected its own sitting governor, Arne Carlson, pundits saw Minnesota as a flashpoint for the resurgence of the religious right. Indeed, Quist once proposed AIDS tests for marriage license applicants. Many now fear the establishment of martial law if he gets elected: an 8 p.m. curfew for all God-fearing adults, a ban on any alcohol stronger than beer, full prosecution of anti-sodomy laws. The truly nervous have already inquired about real estate in Canada.

Oddly, the most striking differences between Quist and Carlson have been downplayed. Carlson's pro-choice stance and his support of gay rights have long antagonized conservatives—yet these are barely issues in the campaign. Likewise, a pair of bizarre personal revelations has done little to stop Quist's momentum. In April, Quist told the *Twin Cities Reader* that marriage is a political arrangement, wherein the "higher level of political authority normally . . . should be in the hands of the husband"—a "genetic predisposition," he called it. In June, *City Pages* revealed that Quist's current wife, Julie, is a former feminist activist who'd once had an abortion and wrote about it in a leftist newsletter. Yet with the press's assent, he spends his days talking about fiscal responsibility.

Since Minnesotans rarely argue in public, the campaign has been waged on the margins—the slurs have all seeped out of the side of someone's mouth, followed by a forced smile. To date, Carlson and Quist have rarely been in the same room. Originally, the governor considered skipping the state GOP convention but ultimately decided to attend, although he had no prayer of winning the endorsement.

Still, the party's executive committee has made a point of banning photos of the governor from party booths at county fairs, including the State Fair, the "great Minnesota get-together," which unfolds just before the September 13 primary. And Republican Vin Weber, the former U.S. representative turned consultant, has been publicly stoned for his support of Carlson, and also because his brother, Joe, is the governor's campaign manager.

Carlson's tactics are what you might expect from an embattled incumbent: he's tried to take the high road, with only a few minor detours into the mire. He recently compared Quist's rise to that of Adolf Hitler, a delicately chosen analogy that he floated in *The American Jewish World*, a small Twin Cities newspaper. After the comment reached the mainstream, Carlson withdrew his sword—apologizing without recanting his remarks.

All this is par for the course for Carlson, who dwells in a political no-man's land. Back in 1990, as state auditor, he didn't even attempt to get the Republican gubernatorial nomination and was easily pummeled in the party's primary by businessman Jon Grunseth. Then Grunseth was accused of marital infidelity and of swimming nude with teenage girls, and Carlson suddenly rose from the ashes to become the I.R. candidate. Although he entered the race only a week before the election, he won narrowly. His greatest asset wasn't that he was Arne Carlson, but that he wasn't Rudy Perpich, the incumbent Democrat.

These days, Carlson routinely skips gubernatorial debates. At an August 13 candidates' forum staged by United We Stand America–Minnesota, Quist was the sole Republican on the dais. After one rival announced his opposition to capital punishment, Quist replied, "I support capital punishment, but only of the guilty," and laughed broadly. Just days after a Planned Parenthood clinic was burned by an arsonist in central Minnesota, Quist had nothing to say on the question of abortion. Maybe that's why they call it the silent majority.

Most political mandarins doubt Quist can actually beat Carlson in the primary, but this state has seen stranger elections. Still, Quist will do well to recall the only Biblical quote that really applies to anyone in politics: "There is none righteous, no, not one" (Romans 3:10).

BURL GILYARD

Burl Gilyard is a staff writer for the *Twin Cities Reader*.

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CROSSES TO BEAR

By John B. Judis

> Some people have the idea that the [Young Communist Leaguer] is politically minded, that nothing outside of politics means anything. Gosh no. They have a few simple problems. There is the problem of getting good men on the baseball team this spring, of opposition from ping-pong teams, of dating girls, etc. We go to shows, parties, dances and all that. In short, the YCL and its members are no different from other people except that we believe in dialectical materialism as the solution to all problems.
>
> —Young Communist League pamphlet, circa 1938

In October 1980, when I was covering the South Dakota Senate race between George McGovern and Republican challenger James Abdnor, I interviewed the Rev. Donald Tottingham, the leader of the state's Moral Majority chapter and a prime opponent of McGovern's. Tottingham told me how his political activity flowed from his conviction, gleaned from the Bible, that a Satanic one-world government was imminent. I had similarly extensive, though not as bizarre, conversations in 1986 with the Rev. Don Lynch, a Muncie, Indiana, Republican congressional candidate, and in 1992 with W. E. "Bob" McClellan, a Southern California car dealer and member of the Christian Coalition, who had been elected to the San Diego City Council the year before. It didn't surprise me that evangelical Christians wanted to talk about the relationship of their religious beliefs to politics: bringing the "good news" of the Gospel to the unconverted and unconvinced was central to their faith.

But during the last two years, when I've asked leaders of religious right organizations such as the Christian Coalition about the relationship of religion to politics, I've gotten hard glances and vague, noncommittal answers. After staring me down, Steve Sheffler, the field director of the Christian Coalition in Iowa, responded that the organization's overall goal is "some positive change in the way the country is going." A prominent national leader of the religious right would only discuss the relevance of religion to politics if his views were off the record. Moreover, public spokesmen such as Ralph Reed, the director of the Christian Coalition, now insist that their organizations are not part of the "religious right" but of the "pro-family movement."

Has the movement changed so fundamentally in the last two years that it cannot even be called the religious or Christian right? I don't think so. Rather, what seems to have happened is that the Christian Coalition and smaller organizations of the religious right have come up against the same sort of limits all sectarian movements encounter. They have been forced to recognize that the very principles that bring members into their fold also limit wider public appeal. In response, the religious right's leaders have attempted to change its public face while retaining its private religious attraction.

Such a change has helped the movement gain influence in states such as Texas and Iowa, but in the long run it doesn't resolve the crisis that lies at its heart. Movements that draw a distinction between their private and public discourse inevitably risk schism, on the one hand, and co-optation, on the other. They risk either losing members or losing meaning. Creating a different public face also doesn't resolve the more basic question of what the relationship should be between religion and politics. Ralph Reed's pro-family movement sounds more benign than Tottingham's crusade, but it is probably no less a hazard to America's constitutional principles.

The religious right, defined as a fusion of conservative Christianity and political conservatism, goes back at least to the 1930s and the anti-New Deal crusades of Gerald B. Winrod and Gerald L. K. Smith. The movement's current incarnation, however, dates from the late '70s. It was initially organized by Southern evangelical ministers who wanted to prevent the Internal Revenue Service from removing the tax exemption on the segregated Christian academies they had set up in response to *Brown* v. *Board of Education*. More broadly, the religious right coalesced in response to Supreme Court decisions limiting school prayer and liberalizing abortion, and to the dramatic changes in American family life and leisure that spurred feminism, gay rights, teenage sexuality and, of course, MTV.

Two kinds of religious organizations emerged from this crucible. The first, epitomized by the Rev. James Dobson's Focus on the Family, defined itself primarily as an educational organization concerned with family issues that were relevant to evangelical Christians, including sex education and abortion. Focus on the Family lobbies the government, but only on these issues, and it does not back candidates. In political terms, it resembles Jewish, Catholic and mainline Protestant pressure groups.

The second kind of organization, more properly

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termed the "religious right," is typified by the Rev. Jerry Falwell's Moral Majority and the Rev. Pat Robertson's Freedom Council and Christian Coalition. Of these, the coalition is currently the most important, with nearly 1 million registered members, 900 chapters and a $13 million annual budget. All these groups function like political movements and parties—implicitly or explicitly running and endorsing candidates, and even participating as a political faction within the Republican Party. (Many of these organizations are registered as nonprofit with the IRS and must use artful dodges like grading candidates on issues through "Christian scorecards" to get around restrictions on open political endorsements.)

Initially, this new religious right was divided along denominational lines. Anti-Darwinian fundamentalists, who believed the Bible was literally true, gravitated toward Falwell's Moral Majority; Pentecostals and other charismatic Christians, who believed, in addition, that Jesus granted mortals the power to speak in tongues and perform miracles, joined Robertson's Freedom Council. Through the Christian Coalition, Robertson and Reed, to their great credit, have united what Robertson calls "biblical Christians" in a single organization.

Reed tries to portray the coalition as a garden-variety lobby. "We really see ourselves as a kind of faith-based Chamber of Commerce, a kind of League of Women Voters, if you will, for people of faith," he told National Public Radio in June. But if he's looking for an analogy, he's looking in the wrong place. The new religious right doesn't resemble the Chamber of Commerce or other business interests so much as it does the old Socialist and Communist parties. Its members are united by conviction rather than by function or employment; and its goal is not merely to defend certain discrete interests but to win political power on behalf of a broad agenda.

Like the older leftwing parties, the religious right also draws on a semiorganized base that is many times larger than itself. Many religious activists don't belong to any organized group, but they still take their cues from ministers affiliated with the Christian Coalition; those who belong to smaller Christian organizations, such as the American Family Association, often follow the coalition's lead. At June's Texas Republican convention, for instance, the Christian Coalition was credited with organizing Tom Pauken's victory as state party chairman, even though the coalition probably had an estimated 400 active members among the 6,000 delegates.

The Christian Coalition doesn't have an explicit membership test, but as its name implies, it is for Christians and its organizing functions make clear that it is primarily for those who take the Bible literally. At a founding seminar for the New Jersey Christian Coalition last spring, organizer Clay Mankamyer told the new recruits, "There is no doctrinal statement. Just the principle that we will go by the infallible word of God. Anybody who agrees with that is welcome." The coalition and other organizations of the religious right also take positions that are clearly derived from sectarian biblical political premises. In Iowa and Texas, the Christian Coalition and other groups have gotten the GOP to endorse planks calling for the teaching of "creation science" in the public schools—an invention of fundamentalist Protestants that was meant to replace the theory of evolution. It not only has no scientific backing from biologists, but it has no religious credence outside of a few Protestant sects.

Like Tottingham, many members of the religious right hold arcane theories about Christ's coming and the end of the world, based on interpretations of Revelation; and Christian Coalition chapters regularly include prophetic books, such as Robertson's *The Secret Kingdom*, on their reading lists. What unites the religious right, however, is not an elaborate theology but certain general assumptions about politics and Christianity. Most members believe that their basic politics can be drawn from a literal reading of the Bible; and most see the goal of their political activity as restoring the United States as a "Christian nation."

If the movement has a theoretician, it is Texas fundamentalist David Barton. Barton, the author of *The Myth of Separation*, contends that the United States was a "Christian nation" until it was subverted by the Warren Court's rulings on school prayer in 1962 and 1963. For Barton and the movement, the period before 1963 was a Golden Age—Adamite America before the fall. Talk to a member of the Christian Coalition like Bob McClellan at any length, and he is likely to show you Barton's graphs linking the "rejection of divine law" in 1963 to the subsequent rise in divorce, sexually transmitted diseases, violent crime and out-of-wedlock pregnancies, as well as the drop in SAT scores and productivity.

When the Constitution was written, there were, of course, competing views of the relationship between religion and politics. Some Americans believed the state should actively encourage Protestant religious worship and observance as a means of sustaining a moral and virtuous republic. A few states, such as Massachusetts and New Hampshire, even maintained religious tests for holding office. But Thomas Jefferson and James Madison, the two leading architects of American democracy, believed that the realm of government should be set apart from that of religion. They maintained that the basic premises of society could be deduced from religion, but could be derived more suitably from natural law and reason. Framing belief in terms of reason allowed public discussion of differing views. By contrast, framing belief and law in religious terms led inevitably to the preference of one religious group over another and to the creation of religious tests for office. More generally, fusing politics and religion could thwart democracy, which depends on reasoned debate. It could also encourage the kind of religious wars that had torn Europe apart.

Jefferson and Madison did not deny that religion played a useful role in inculcating virtue and morality. Jefferson argued that Jesus's "system of morality was the most benevolent and sublime that has been ever taught." Nevertheless, he and Madison thought religious belief would

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be more likely to flourish if removed from state jurisdiction. And they were right. The United States, as Reinhold Niebuhr once wrote, continues to be "at once the most secular and the most religious of Western nations."

To the consternation of many Americans, the emergence of the religious right has encouraged the trends that Madison and Jefferson feared. At the Texas Republican convention in June, candidates announced their church affiliations. At the Iowa Republican convention the same month, Christian Coalition members made Christian belief a basis for backing a candidate. (Iowa Governor Terry Branstad, the Christian Coalition's Ione Dilley declared, is a politician "who does acknowledge his creator.")

In several states, religious right candidates have been turning school board races into religious contests. Last spring in a Dallas suburb Christian right candidates, facing two Jewish incumbents, emphasized their church affiliation and religious beliefs at candidate forums. Afterward, Rebecca Morris, one of the defeated incumbents, told an interviewer, "I never know how to deal with the issue 'I'm a Christian and you're not.'" Protestants and Catholics also feel the burden. Said Republican Mary Bennett of the Texas party's elections to choose delegates, "If you didn't say, 'I am a Christian and I attend a certain church,' you were excluded."

JERRY FALWELL, PAT ROBERTSON AND RALPH REED
BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

In each presidential election since 1980, religious right leaders have argued for supporting the Republicans against the Democrats on religious grounds. In 1992 Operation Rescue founder Randall Terry wrote in his newsletter that "to vote for Bill Clinton is to sin against God." Later, Reed told a conference sponsored by the Center for Ethics and Public Policy that Terry's statement "presented a harsh side of religious belief that is simply inappropriate in a political context." Reed did not say that Terry's views were inappropriate because they imposed a religious test on candidates. They were inappropriate because they were "harsh."

In building its movement, the religious right has run up against another even more formidable wall than that separating church and state. In 1989 the Gallup Poll asked people to rate whom they would like to have as neighbors. Near the bottom, well behind Catholics, Jews, blacks, Koreans, Hispanics, Vietnamese, Russians and unmarried couples, were "religious fundamentalists." Only members of religious cults were less popular. The poll was about fundamentalists, but the result touches on what bothers many people about the religious right: the suspicion that it is a threat to privacy.

In the last thirty years the Supreme Court has claimed that the right to privacy exists under the "penumbras" of the Bill of Rights. Yet the concept has been a practical part of American life ever since a booming early-twentieth-century economy made it possible for large numbers of citizens to enjoy the kind of education and leisure—including a prolonged period of adolescence—hitherto reserved for the upper classes. This new realm of personal freedom became the basis for new kinds of consumer products, as well as sexual experimentation and novel social arrangements.

The religious right arose, however, partly in response to the trends that emerged from this freedom, and its agenda has consisted of seeking to restrict and regulate personal life. The religious right wants to prohibit abortion; allow employers to hire and fire based on a person's sexual practices; maintain criminal statutes against homosexuality and some kinds of heterosexual practices; and force television networks and stations not to show programs that it deems immoral. Jeff Fisher, the director the Texas branch of the American Family Association, boasted to me that his group had succeeded in forcing thirteen of seventeen ABC affiliates to take the acclaimed "NYPD Blue" off the air.

While Americans certainly sympathize with some of the religious right's causes—a majority probably opposes taxpayer financing of abortions and insurance coverage of the "domestic partners" of public employees—it's no surprise that they see the movement's overall agenda as

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an assault on their privacy. They see in the religious right's obsession with homosexuality and soft-core pornography an unruly intolerance that flows from a repressed discomfort with any kind of sexuality. They see in its attempts to dictate television programming a desire to turn every network into Robertson's Family Channel, which intersperses the televangelist's "700 Club" with "Lassie," "Gunsmoke" and "Rin Tin Tin" reruns.

Reed, Robertson and other savvy religious right leaders recognize that they face a dilemma: namely, that the source of their movement's energy and growth—its sectarian Christian quest to restore a golden age—is also the source of its political weakness. Since its founding in 1989 the Christian Coalition has followed two different strategies for surmounting the problem. First, it has pursued what Reed once imprudently called a politics of "stealth." The coalition focused on low-turnout school board, city council and party organization races where a motivated minority could carry the day, and then mobilized its followers through churches to support coalition-backed candidates, while neutralizing potential opposition by concealing from the public the religious basis of their candidacy. When Election Day came, many of these candidates won simply by gathering 20 percent of the vote in a crowded field.

The strategy, however, had its limits. Take the case of San Diego. In November 1990 religious right candidates captured sixty of eighty-eight local races and took over the Republican Party's central committee. The next fall twenty-four school board candidates won seats—often without revealing what they stood for. But once the new religious right school board and city council members revealed their sectarian priorities—for instance, through demanding that the computer spelling program "Wizards" be removed from the schools and that a Roald Dahl classic be banned from library shelves—moderate Republicans began organizing. In November 1992 moderate Republicans and Democrats won forty-one of forty-two city council and school board races against the right's candidates.

Though some Christian Coalition chapters continue to follow a version of the old stealth strategy, most have moved on to a variation of what Communists in the 1930s called a "popular front" strategy. Like the stealth strategy, it involves a split between private beliefs and public practice—but where the stealth strategy called on religious right candidates and officials to enact their agenda once they gained power, a popular front strategy requires them to work with other Republicans on goals they share and, in some cases, to overlook important differences between them. Under Robertson and Reed's direction, the Christian Coalition began backing pro-choice Republicans such as Texas Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison. At the Iowa Republican convention in June, coalition leaders successfully discouraged a challenge to pro-choice Lieutenant Governor Joy Corning by a Christian right candidate. At the same time, Reed sought to develop a "broader issues agenda" that went beyond abortion and homosexuality. The Christian Coalition threw $1.4 million into a campaign to defeat President Clinton's health care plan and began to take positions on issues ranging from taxes to the North American Free Trade Agreement.

The aim of this strategy is to create political distance between the organization's biblical Christianity and its public positions. Though it has enjoyed success, the strategy is not without its drawbacks. By moderating its program, the coalition risks disillusioning its adherents and ceding control of the movement's base to more radical elements. It also risks turning the movement into a cynical vehicle for the secular ambitions of Robertson and other top leaders. Robertson's newfound moderation—expressed in his latest book, *The Turning Tide*—has already led to turmoil at his own Regent University Law School. Last year the televangelist dismissed Dean Herbert Titus, who subordinated law to biblical morality, and this year he fired three professors who protested Titus's removal.

By expanding its agenda, the coalition also mutes its religious message, while simultaneously incurring the charge of indiscriminately associating Christianity with positions on which Christians clearly disagree. Does the Lord really have a position on NAFTA? Or on national health insurance? Reed himself has expressed discomfort with groups that publish "biblical scorecards," which cite Scripture to justify grading candidates from "A" to "F" on fiscal or foreign policy. Still, by publishing *Christian* Coalition scorecards on a candidate's position on NAFTA or national health insurance, is his group acting that differently?

To see the religious right's limits, all you have to do is look at its role in the GOP. The coalition and its allies have taken over the party apparatus in some states, but they have not taken over candidate selection or won the hearts of primary or general election voters. They have yet to elect one of their own to the Senate or governor's office. They have won control of some suburban and rural school boards around the country, and also some state legislative races. That's not much of a takeover, though. And, as in San Diego, these victories often have been followed by reversals.

The movement's greatest political successes have come in Southern and border states that have a high percentage of evangelicals and that, because of their homogeneous religious population, enjoy a much closer relation locally between church and state. Suburban voters in Georgia don't share the same fear of fundamentalism as voters in Portland, Oregon, or Alexandria, Virginia.

In states where Catholics, Jews, mainline Protestants and nonbelievers make up a large percentage of the population, and where there are growing numbers of young middle-class suburbanites, the religious right has proved a divisive force. It has succeeded in taking over Republican Party organizations, but at the expense of participation by moderate voters. The right has cost Republicans dearly in Virginia, Minnesota, Washington, Oregon and California.

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It could also hurt them in Texas, where leaders from the Christian Coalition, the American Family Association and Texas United for Life meet monthly in a private prayer group called "the gathering" to plan political strategy. In June, they dominated the deliberations of the state's Republican convention. Two of the candidates for party chair, former Reagan official Tom Pauken and Representative Joe Barton, avidly sought their support, while prominent Houston Republican Dolly Madison McKenna did not. McKenna got only 10 percent of the vote and Pauken, the Christian Coalition's choice, won easily. But Pauken, a Catholic, has never been a member of the religious right. And in any case, control over party positions doesn't entail either control over the state's Republican voters or victory in elections.

Texas voters choose their candidates by primary rather than by convention. Only candidates with substantial financial backing can afford to contest for office in Texas's twenty-three media markets. As a result, the Christian Coalition has had to accept whatever Republican candidates the electorate chooses, including the pro-choice Hutchison and gubernatorial candidate George W. Bush, who told reporters he had not read the coalition-inspired platform. In this fall's election, the religious right's effectiveness in backing Republicans will be directly proportional to its invisibility.

Some conservatives, who are uncomfortable with the religious right's quest for a Christian America, still contend that the movement has served a useful purpose by dramatizing the dissolution of the family and the decline of schools. I'd argue the contrary. Because of its reliance on religious explanations, the Christian right has most often slighted these problems. The solutions it has proffered are either harmful or irrelevant.

Take the schools. The religious right candidates I've observed have stood for the reinstitution of school prayer, the elimination or drastic modification of sex education and the introduction of creation science. These are not issues on which the future of our young rests. School prayers are either blatantly discriminatory or meaningless; sex education is, well, complicated; and creation science is bunkum. At one suburban San Diego school board race that I covered in 1992, none of the three religious right candidates had his children in public schools. These candidates didn't have the faintest idea whether new chemistry labs were needed or what kind of vocational training was being offered. In the current Texas race for the state board of education, four of the six religious right candidates either have their children in private schools or teach them at home.

The Christian Coalition's ventures into broader public policy have also lacked merit. Take fiscal policy. Like other Republican conservatives, the coalition advocates a balanced budget, but it also proposes that the U.S. Treasury raise the tax exemption families receive for each dependent from $2,500 to $10,000. At that rate, no family of four that earns $40,000 or less would pay income taxes. Robert McIntyre, the director of Citizens for Tax Justice, estimates that such a plan would add $200 billion to this year's deficit. How does the coalition plan to cut taxes drastically and balance the budget? A call to Arthur Laffer might be in order.

There is, finally, the even more disturbing question of the religious right's Christianity. Is the movement contributing, however imperfectly, to the spread of virtue and morality? As Niebuhr argued in *Moral Man and Immoral Society*, Christianity at its best has leavened the natural egoism of groups and nations. It has contributed a pure love of humankind, a humble recognition of the imperfection of human beings and an ethic of compassion toward the sick and the oppressed. The Christian awakenings, beginning in the 1750s, have played an immensely positive role in shaping America's transition from colony to nation, from agricultural to industrial society—and in lending urgency to the struggle against slavery and racial inequality.

Is today's religious right injecting a Christian spirit of compassion and selflessness into American politics? The only group that seems to elicit its compassion is the unborn; it does not display similar compassion, for instance, toward the poor or the victims of AIDS—two obvious groups for which a modern-day Christian might be expected to express concern. Robertson, who in his youth worked among the poor, now has contempt for their suffering. Asked about the welfare system, he quotes Paul's advice on how to deal with disorderly Thessalonians, "If anyone will not work, neither let him eat." And why is the Christian Coalition against community rating of insurance premiums? Reed warns that there will be "massive cross-subsidies from intact, two-parent families with children who lead *healthy* lifestyles to those who do not." Iowa coalition official Steve Sheffler, a former insurance agent, puts it more clearly: families of the healthy will have to pay higher premiums to cover AIDS patients.

It is not a question of what policy government should finally adopt. Perhaps welfare should be eliminated and community rating discouraged. Rather, it is a question of the spirit with which Americans—and Christians—should regard the poor and the terminally ill. The Christian right is, in fact, a perfect example of what happens when the founding principles of church and state are violated. What Jefferson and Madison understood, and what Niebuhr affirmed 150 years later, is that Christianity does not provide a political agenda but rather an underlying social conscience with which to approach politics. Religion plays its most constructive role precisely when church and state are separate.

When the two are fused, however, when organizations acting in the name of Christianity seek political power, then religion becomes subordinate to politics. It becomes infected with the darker egoism of group and nation; it no longer softens and counters our ungenerous impulses but clothes them in holy righteousness. •

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BOOKS & The Arts

Stanley Kauffmann on Films

Imitations

Last year Jane Anderson wrote *The Positively True Adventures of the Texas Cheerleader-Murdering Mom*, a smart and crackling screenplay that, as directed by Michael Ritchie, became the best American made-for-T.V. film I've seen. Now Anderson has written **It Could Happen to You** (TriStar), and something has happened to *her*.

Like the T.V. film, this one too is based on fact. A New York policeman, who doesn't have the money with him for a tip, promises a waitress half his winnings on a newly purchased lottery ticket if it comes through. On this base, Anderson built a script that is meant to be a Capra heart-warmer about good people in a world of wolves and how goodness eventually lets them triumph. But Capra and his screenwriters kept some balance between sugar and sting; Anderson teeters. For instance, in *It's a Wonderful Life*, Capra had a choric character, an angel whom he called Clarence. Anderson has a choric character whom she calls Angel. The fact that he turns out to be mortal doesn't quite overcome the initial saccharine labeling (and implication).

In fact every character is labeled, if not by name, then by bald characteristics. The cop and the waitress are O.K. people; the cop's wife and the waitress's boss are not. And so on. When the cop's ticket wins $4 million, his wife raises hell because he wants to keep his word to the waitress. The wife, so shrewishly written that we can't understand how the cop ever married her, goes on a spending spree that is just as stale and tedious as she is. At the end, the screenplay punishes her severely because, we're told, audiences at test screenings wanted her to suffer. Maybe if the role had been written more credibly, a less obtrusively harsh fate for her would have been possible.

Occasionally there's a moment that struggles up through the slosh to wave at us—a sequence in the otherwise empty Yankee Stadium with the cop and some kids, or the very finish with a balloon over Central Park. But most of the time, that slosh just keeps lapping at our ankles.

Not all of the misfire is Anderson's fault, however. Nor is it the fault of Andrew Bergman, who directed—at least as far as the directing goes. (He showed with *The In-Laws* and *The Freshman*, both made from scripts of his own, that he knows how to keep a film cogent.) But if he had anything to do with the casting, which he presumably did, he flubbed badly—not least in his understanding of Capra. Capra knew how much actors contribute to texture. He put off production of *Mr. Deeds Goes to Town* for six months, at considerable expense, until Gary Cooper was free. He knew that the scene on the park bench in *You Can't Take It with You*, in which the plot is not advanced an inch, was essential because the beings of James Stewart and Jean Arthur were part of the picture's lifeblood. Bergman might reply that if comparable people had been available today, he would have used them. But it's hard to believe—it's certainly not true—that there are no leading actors around better than the ones he used here.

Nicholas Cage, who plays the cop, is something of a sloven in acting and presence whose slovenliness is supposed to give him regular-guy appeal. When a role suits him as easily as in *Moonstruck*, he can get by; but when he's supposed actively to generate appeal, as here, he's a nullity. Bridget Fonda, the waitress, continues to be the luckiest screen actress around. Apparently her family name helped her to get started. (Cage's real name is Coppola, which didn't hurt.) After she was started, and after there were no protests in theaters where her films appeared, film people just continued to use her. Anyway, that's the sort of shrugging acquiescence her career makes us infer.

Cage and Fonda exemplify a kind of laziness in producers and directors. Both of these actors are stars in the nominal sense—certainly not in the bankable sense—simply out of momentum that got started and was easier to coast on than to stop. Cage's gelatinous plop on the screen, Fonda's blankness of personality and tininess of talent get overlooked by Producer Y because Producer X used them last year, and audiences seemingly said, "Oh, what the hell...." More compliantly than usual—though to some extent it's always true—audiences collaborate in making Cage and Fonda seem like stars. Our generosity? Perhaps. More likely it's our complaisance. If Cage and Fonda are Up There, we tend to think, there must be something to them and we might as well cooperate.

FILMS WORTH SEEING

Barcelona. *Bright writing and directing by Whit Stillman. Realities of non-American life impinge amusingly, poignantly on two post-preppies abroad. (Reviewed 8/15/94)* **Eat Drink Man Woman.** *Or food and sex. This Taiwanese film has much more of the former than the latter, and the former is in fact more interesting here. But it's all enjoyable. (Reviewed 9/5/94)* **Spanking the Monkey.** *Excellently deceptive. A story of a restless college student on vacation deepens darkly. David O. Russell's debut film, very welcome. (8/1/94)* **The Wedding Gift.** *A tearjerker—and more: because of exceptional acting, writing, directing. Julie Walters and Jim Broadbent are a middle-aged English couple. She gets a mysterious ailment, and they decide to handle it as breezily as possible. (8/22&29/94)*—**SK**

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One of the acting catastrophes must be ascribed directly to Bergman—Rosie Perez's performance as the vixenish wife. By now Perez is known for grinding out a product, the garrulous, sharp-tongued Latino hoyden. Here Bergman has let her go so far over the top that "over the top" no longer has meaning—and all in a voice that's like a file scraping tin.

Last week, reviewing Arnold Schwarzenegger, I tried to distinguish between films like his—of fake violence—and those that truly shock. Here's one of the latter. **Killing Zoe** is a first film by Roger Avary—anyway, the first he has directed. He wrote it, too, but he did some previous writing with Quentin Tarantino, whose first film was the gory *Reservoir Dogs*. Even if we didn't know about Avary's past, we might assume the Tarantino connection from *Killing Zoe*.

It's about an American safecracker (Eric Stoltz) who is summoned to Paris by a French crook (Jean-Hugues Anglade) to crack the safe in a bank robbery by the crook's gang. On Stoltz's first night in Paris he engages a hooker named Zoe (played by Julie Delpy) who then turns up later in the story. After the hooker episode, Stoltz goes on the town that night with Anglade and his wild gang. The next day they storm into the bank with automatic weapons.

A few small questions of credibility. Why did they need to summon Stoltz from the United States, a man Anglade hadn't seen in eleven years? (The reason given melts as it's spoken.) If Anglade is so clever, why did they all go out drinking and drugging the night before the job? Why especially did Stoltz get so high since he has a fine-tuned job to do? Anglade and pals might be excused as continental-style nihilists, but Stoltz is supposed to be a cautious cookie. And are we really supposed to take the tortuously happy ending seriously?

Much of the film is very smartly directed, in a relatively usual hotted-up way. The opening grabs us—a car speeding to the Paris airport. (Whose car? Anglade isn't there to pick up Stoltz.) This rushing start is capped with a huge close-up of Stoltz, just arrived, in the back of a cab. Clever visual pacing. The sex scene between him and Delpy is pleasant. The undertow of homoeroticism in Anglade, beginning with his fury at finding the hooker in Stoltz's hotel room, tugs significantly throughout.

But the shootings. The explosions. The slashing and smashing. They quite obviously become the picture's real reason for existence. Once the robbery starts, with all of the gang either hung over or high, and getting higher, the whole thing is simply disgusting. What is most disgusting is that, unlike Peckinpah (whose slo-mo violence is once again imitated here), Avary doesn't convince us that he actually believes in the violence—as medium or code.

He convinces us only that his choice of this story was purely opportunistic. He thinks that murder, enjoyed by killers, is the easiest way for a filmmaker to break in these days. (So much for Jim Jarmusch, Hal Hartley, David O. Russell and Whit Stillman.) Worse than anything in the film is the odor of cynicism it exudes. •

The many principles of Dwight Macdonald.

Rebel Without a Pause

By Paul Berman

I.

In the days when Dwight Macdonald was not only editing and co-publishing *Politics* magazine but also writing whole sections of each issue, he used to amuse his readers by composing letters-to-the-editor to denounce and correct his own opinions. That was a charmingly self-deprecatory thing to do. It was funny. The self-denunciations showed that Macdonald, alone among political commentators, knew himself to be human, and was happy to share the secret with his own subscribers. The world is full of political writers who claim to be supremely independent, but Macdonald was independent of even himself. In his biography of Macdonald, Michael Wreszin quotes with approval a judgment by Czeslaw Milosz, who described the quality as "a totally American phenomenon" (which would be nice, if

Paul Berman is the editor most recently of *Blacks and Jews: Alliances and Arguments* (Delacorte).

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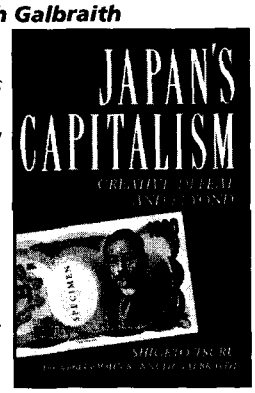

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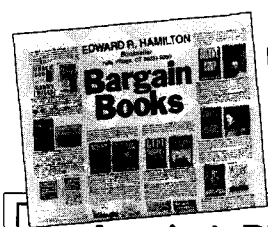

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true): "the completely free man, capable of making decisions at all times and about all things strictly according to his personal moral judgment."

The habit of heckling his own opinions was a main element in Macdonald's prose style, too. He was always posting footnotes or intruding parentheses into his own sentences in order to add a second point of view, normally quite skeptical of the first. You could almost imagine that "Dwight Macdonald" was actually two persons: a Macdonald from Yale who was urbane, relaxed, witty and intelligent, and a second Macdonald from Yale who was even more urbane, relaxed and so forth. Delmore Schwartz's judgment was this: "antagonism for its own sake is his appetite and neurosis, and none of his political predictions come true, but he is a master of expository prose." And the source of that mastery was, I think, the doubleness in his approach. Macdonald No. 1 expressed judgments; Macdonald No. 2 judged expressions; and the writing came out stereophonic.

His eternal obsession was to locate the exact point where the seemingly true turns out to be patently false. He was always arching his eyebrow at the spectacle of phrases that mean less than they appear to mean—especially his own phrases. In 1967 it was revealed that *Encounter* magazine, where he worked for a while in the '50s, had been in the pay of the CIA, and Macdonald wrote a confession in *Esquire*. It began: "I confess that from August 1956 to June 1957 I was on the payroll of the CIA, unwittingly and, as they used to say in the National Student Association, unwittily"—in which the first of the wit-words declared his innocence, and the second, by drawing out the silliness of the first, showed his innocence to be an innocent's.

The attention to the real meaning of phrases sometimes produced miniature masterpieces of metaphoric wit. There was his famous description from 1947 of the fellow-traveler terrain surrounding Roosevelt's one-time vice president, Henry Wallace, which I quote here because, with Macdonald's example before me, I am driven to admit that elsewhere I have misquoted the passage. Besides, the description of fellow-traveler ghastliness (debased language, ritualized thinking, aversion to sharp criticism) summarizes, in a reverse version, the main principles of his own writing (true language, new thinking, sharp criticism):

> Wallaceland is the mental habitat of Henry Wallace plus a few hundred thousand regular readers of THE NEW REPUBLIC [a fellow-traveling journal in those days], *The Nation*, and *PM*. It is a region of perpetual fogs, caused by the warm winds of the liberal Gulf Stream coming in contact with the Soviet glacier. Its natives speak "Wallese," a debased provincial dialect.
>
> Wallese is as rigidly formalized as Mandarin Chinese. The Good people are described by ritualistic adjectives: "forward looking," "freedom loving," "clear thinking" and, of course, "democratic" and "progressive." The Bad people are always "reactionaries" or "red-baiters"; there are surprisingly few of them, considering the power they wield, and they are perversely wicked, since their *real* interests would best be served by the Progressive and Realistic policies favored by the Good people. Wallese is always employed to Unite rather than Divide (hence the fog), and to Further Positive, Constructive Aims rather than Merely to Engage in Irresponsible and Destructive Criticism. As George F. Babbit of Zenith City, who had his own brand of Wallese in the '20s, used to say: "It's Easy Enough to Criticize!"

Macdonald in person had a squeaky laugh, and the obsession with precision and perfectly visualized images sometimes produced a squeaky tone in his writing, too. At the end of the Second World War he wrote an essay in *Politics* called "On the Responsibility of Peoples," about German war guilt. In the course of arguing against identifying the entire German people with the Nazi Party, he came up with this sentence:

> The theory of the German people's collective responsibility for Nazi policies not only (1) ignores the deep cleavages between the Nazis and the people, but also (2) cements these cracks up again.

That is a first-rate Macdonald sentence. Its meaning is exact, and it displays the amusing seriousness with which he always took his metaphors, in this case, the deep cleavages, which most writers would invoke blindly but which Macdonald insists on picturing vividly enough to go ahead and, in the next phrase, cement them up again. But the fun he has with cleavage and cement takes your mind off the question of war guilt. The sentence seems faintly jolly. Instead of considering his point about collective responsibility you find yourself worrying that something is lacking in his response to Nazism (which had to be true of anybody who could also write, as he once did, "Europe has its Hitlers but we have our Rotarians").

Irving Howe, who worked as an assistant at *Politics* for a while, once took a jab at Macdonald's linguistic prissiness, and Macdonald responded by composing a defense of semantic and syntactic precision in which he said: "There is no such thing as a clear message delivered in a confused style; the message is the style and the style is the message. Selah!" Which is not always true. Clarity can turn into an end in itself, and perfect transparent prose can divert you from thinking about anything but perfect transparency.

Intermittently throughout his career, Macdonald suffered from a writer's block. By the late 1960s and '70s, the block obstructed his productivity almost completely. I can imagine why. Self-consciousness about language was the source of his originality and verve, but self-consciousness is bound to have made him freeze, too. And so we come to the irony in Macdonald's achievement. Reading him, you get the impression that he sat down at his typewriter whistling with merry anticipation. Not true. It was agony to get that wonderfully simple and unpretentious prose on the page. With enough heckling, even the best of orators will eventually become flustered, and Macdonald, I can imagine, finally heckled himself right off the podium.

Or possibly the block should be explained in another way. It may be that Macdonald's kind of journalism—the eternally up-to-date commentary on things of the moment—cannot be done during the whole of a writer's career except badly. Journalistic commentary may be a stage of life, like rock 'n' roll. Afterward, the expert on up-to-dateness had better go in for other topics, for instance, the history of remote times. Edmund Wilson spent many years reviewing books on contemporary themes, and then had the wisdom to retreat to the nineteenth century. In Macdonald's case, the Guggenheim Foundation tried to push him in the right direction by putting up the money for a study of Edgar Allan Poe. But very little came of it. Macdonald bought a cottage by the sea and never wrote more than the introduction to an anthology of poems, in which he quoted James Russell Lowell on Poe:

> Who has written some things far the best of their kind,
> But somehow the heart seems squeezed out by the mind.

A Rebel in Defense of Tradition: The Life and Politics *of Dwight Macdonald*
by Michael Wreszin
(Basic Books, 590 pp., $30)

Max Shachtman and His Left: A Socialist's Odyssey through the "American Century"
by Peter Drucker
(Humanities Press, 346 pp., $49.95, $18.50 paper)

II.

Macdonald's high point of productivity came in the late '30s and '40s. He worked at *Partisan Review* (of which he was one of the original ed

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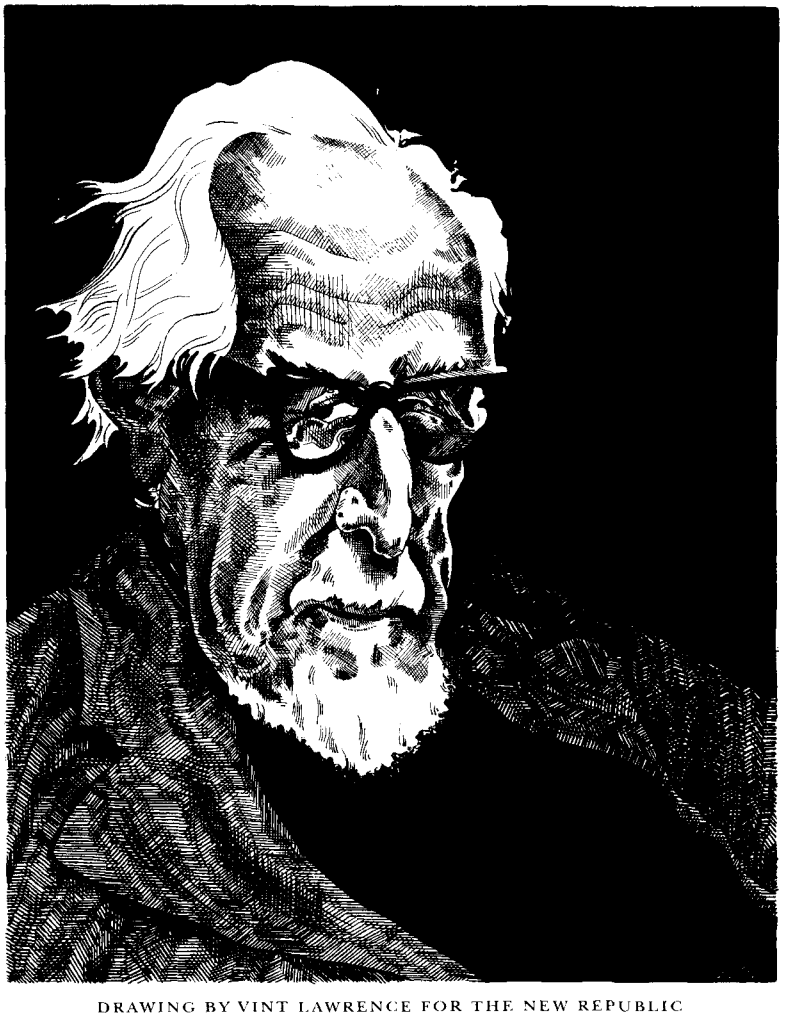
tors, after the magazine had broken with the Communist Party), at the Marxist journal *New International* and at *Politics*, none of which was popularly read, yet each of which managed in some way to be true to the era. The era was, however, very long ago, and nothing shows the antiquity so quickly as a glance at the opinions that Macdonald expressed.

He lived through the New Deal, but he had no faith in it. He described Franklin Roosevelt and Wendell Willkie as an indistinguishable entity: "Willkievelt." He opposed American participation in the Second World War, and felt his opposition with such vigor that in 1943 he left *Partisan Review* over the matter and founded *Politics* in 1944 as an anti-war journal. He always expressed himself in a personal voice, and he had a genuine touch of the curmudgeon, and so it is easy to look at his various judgments and conclude that he had nailed whim to his doorpost, as Emerson once advised. But that was not the case. He did have a political philosophy of his own, which he arrived at during the course of the Great Depression by making three correct observations, remembering one historical lesson from the past and failing to make further two observations, which I will list Macdonald-style, numbers and all.

He noticed that (1) as of 1929, capitalism had collapsed, which he confirmed by going out to report on U.S. Steel and other business topics for *Fortune* magazine in the early and mid-'30s. He noticed that (2) the working class was growing more powerful, as anyone could have verified and (3) the world was stumbling toward yet another catastrophic war. He recalled the entirely correct lesson (4) that during and after the previous war, working class insurrections had broken out all over Europe, and in Russia the insurrectionaries had come to power and established a new kind of society. Meanwhile he failed to see (5) that capitalism in its state of collapse was, nonetheless, tremendously flexible, capable of becoming vastly worse, Nazi-style, than anyone with a revolutionary Marxist background was likely to predict, or considerably better, New Deal-style. He failed to see (6) the adaptability of democratic institutions in the United States. And on the basis of those three correct contemporary observations, the one correct historical recollection and the two misperceptions, he came to feel that "objective conditions" (his phrase) made a socialist revolution entirely feasible in much of the world; or else all was doomed.

That was the logic behind his anti-Roosevelt skepticism. The New Deal, as seen through his six-part lens, was destined to be either benignly pointless or maligningly proto-fascist. He failed to support American intervention in the Second World War not because of a private conscience about pacifism (though he admired the C.O.s who did have consciences), nor because he was indifferent to the possibility of fascist victory, nor even because he thought Nazism was no worse than Western capitalism (though the statement about Rotarians and a few other choice remarks suggest a shakiness on that point). His anti-interventionist position was owed, rather, to the belief that revolutionary socialism was the only realistic way to bring the fascists down. He looked for a "Third Camp," neither Allied nor Axis, which was going to offer nonviolent active resistance to the Axis and would then go on to overthrow capitalism, too, and thereby forestall the Dark Ages that were otherwise certain to descend—though sometimes the argument went the other way and he pictured revolution first, the defeat of fascism second.



DRAWING BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

For a while in the mid-'30s, Macdonald imagined that Stalin and the Communists were the leaders of the revolutionary movement. But the defense of the Moscow Trials of 1936 that was offered by, above all, Malcolm Cowley in THE NEW REPUBLIC succeeded only in convincing Macdonald of Stalinism's mendacity. And so he turned to Trotsky, and to Trotsky's organization in the United States, the Socialist Workers Party, of which he became a formal member, Bolshevik discipline and a weekly column and all. Trotskyism might seem another sign of whim, given the size of the Socialist Workers. The party never exceeded a few hundred members in the '30s, which made it the largest Trotskyist organization in the world.

But, as was always argued, back in 1917 Lenin's faction had been tiny, too, showing that you never know; and meanwhile the party could claim an abnormally high brains-per-member ratio, beginning at the top with leaders such as Max Shachtman and descending to the level of the college recruits. The romantic appeal of Trotsky himself was nothing to scoff at. From his exile's home in Mexico, Trotsky kept up a lively correspondence with Macdonald and the editors of *Partisan Review*. Macdonald wrote to Trotsky on behalf of the magazine requesting the great Marxist's participation; Trotsky hesitated; a second editor weighed in; and Trotsky, maneuvering by now, urged a harder line against *The Nation* and THE NEW REPUBLIC and the fellow-traveling press. "It is impossible to progress without a whip," was Trotsky's instruction to the boys at *Partisan Review*. "It is necessary to empty this filthy pail of Stalinism to the bottom."

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Unfortunately for Trotsky, Macdonald's own effort at emptying the filthy pail took the inconvenient form of wondering in print if Trotsky wasn't responsible for creating Stalinism in the first place. In an article for the party journal *New International*, Macdonald recalled Trotsky's suppression of the Kronstadt sailors' revolt in 1921. He speculated about the gap between Bolshevik means and ends. Trotsky, for his part, is reported to have said, "Every man has the right to be stupid on occasion, but Comrade Macdonald abuses it"—yet found himself to the day of his assassination in August 1940 having to contend with the Kronstadt argument. On the day in question, a young Trotskyist from Chicago named Saul Bellow arrived in the Mexican suburb to meet the Old Man, only to be weirdly ushered into the hospital room where Trotsky lay dead under a cone of bloody bandages (as described in Bellow's new book, *It All Adds Up*). If Bellow had gone instead into Trotsky's workroom and had turned on the dictaphone, he would have heard Trotsky's voice railing against the "very muddled and stupid" opinions of Comrade Macdonald of New York, a pest to the end.

The issues that Macdonald (and some other writers) had raised proved to be devastating to the inner serenity of revolutionary Marxism, not just for the moment. Small as it was, the party split. Macdonald lingered for a while in the more free-thinking faction that was led by Shachtman. Then the free-thinking schismatics schismatized again, and again, and everyone who was involved in those torturous battles selected his own treasured morsel from the old Trotskyist orthodoxy to carry away, and abandoned all the other morsels, and in that manner planted all sorts of political inspirations for the future. And of the several new political positions that shortly came into existence, the two that most clearly divided between them everything that had been valuable in the old revolutionary left were, it seems to me, Macdonald's and the totally anti-Macdonald position that was adopted by Shachtman, about whom something should be said.

Shachtman was not the Yale man as radical. He grew up in Jewish Harlem, endured City College briefly and took on all the personal qualities of Bolshevism from its days of virtue. He was stern, honest, argumentative, cultured, selfless, dedicated, puritanical and charismatic, though only to people who already agreed with him, as Peter Drucker points out. His first important theoretical contribution to American Marxism was to elaborate the concept of "bureaucratic collectivism" as a way to outdo Trotsky's condemnation of Stalinism. His next contribution was the idea about a Third Camp (it was from Shachtman that Macdonald developed his own idea). The contribution after that was to realize that a Third Camp could be defined any way he wanted. And so, as soon as he had broken with Trotsky and the official Trotskyists and was the leader of his own tinier and brainier organization, the definition, free of its leash, took to following him wherever he chose to wander.

Shachtman's Third Camp was the anti-fascist and anti-capitalist resistance, as per Macdonald's wartime ideal. Then it was the non-Stalinist anti-colonialist revolutionary movement around the world. Next it was a social democratic movement led by the likes of Walter Reuther and Clement Atlee. And in the same ever-shifting manner, Shachtman guided his groupuscule and his Third Camp through a series of party labels and new alliances (the Workers Party in the '40s; the Independent Socialist League in the '50s; the Socialist Party beginning in 1958) and a series of trade union maneuvers (as rank and file oppositionists within the United Auto Workers and other unions; then as rank and file anti-oppositionists; then as midlevel labor leaders; finally, as top leaders and

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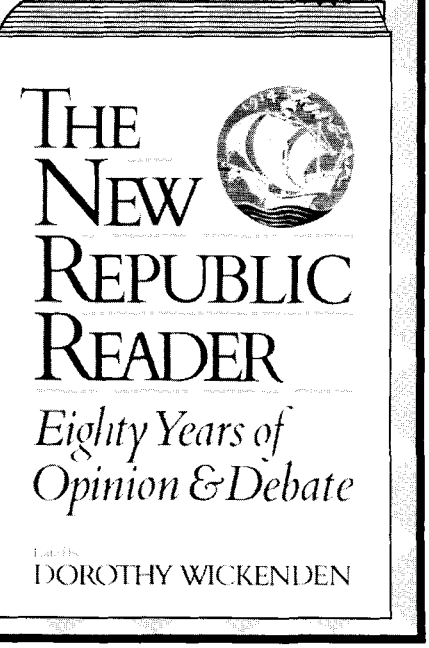

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whisperers-into-powerful-ears, where several of the old Shachtmanites currently remain). Meanwhile his worry about bureaucratic collectivism grew ever more severe, until he came to think that Stalinism might well spread across the world, which was terrifying. So he devoted himself increasingly to combating Stalinism within the American labor movement and around the world, and he ended by outflanking Reuther on the right and championing the cold war bellicosity of the AFL-CIO leadership, even into Vietnam. And at that dismal point, in 1972, he died.

Drucker's biography of Shachtman is not especially well-written or well-organized, but the footnotes and the details are sufficiently lush to clarify the shifting position, which in Shachtman's case constitutes the life. In his acknowledgements, Drucker salutes his comrades of the Fourth International, which explains why the early Shachtman of orthodox Trotskyist days looms as a farsighted moral hero in these pages and the later Shachtman looms as less of a hero, until at the end he drops off into sheer deplorability. Still, the biographer is broad-minded enough to recognize that Shachtman, in moving from revolutionary Marxism to a mainstream AFL-CIO cold war politics, had performed a maneuver that may have resembled, but was not entirely identical to, the age-old phenomenon of admirable young radicals who become regrettable old conservatives.

In the conventional Marxist view, the United States, as the capital of capitalism, has always been the capital of world reaction and imperialist exploitation, too. Yet there has always been, throughout the history of the American left, a heretical departure from that view, which holds that, on the contrary, the capital of capitalism is also the center of world progress (as per the Marxism of Marx), and the proper place for a champion of the working class had better be in the ranks of America's labor mainstream. One generation after another of American labor Marxists has come up with that heretical view, starting perhaps with Samuel Gompers, who began as a friend of the Socialist Labor Party and a reader of *Capital* before carrying his analysis one step further and shifting to the American Federation of Labor. A faction of the American Socialist Party made the same move during the First World War; followed by another faction, the Kautskyite "Old Guard," in the '30s; followed by Jay Lovestone's Bukharinite faction of American communism, whose version of the mainstream leap brought them conspiratorially to the top of the AFL-CIO's foreign policy bureau.

Naturally the historians of the American left, most of them, have tended to sneer at those repeated rightward lurches, as if in each instance rank opportunism had overtaken a formerly stouthearted group of militants (as has been known to happen). Yet in each case a proletarian logic was visibly at work, at least to anyone willing to look. For if you clung to the deepest of all Marxist ideas and believed that working-class action holds the secret to history, why shouldn't the AFL-CIO have been considered a far more radical organization than any of the left-wing parties whose orthodoxy the heretics had rejected? And if workers' rights were vastly greater in the democratic West than in the Communist world, why shouldn't a consistent Marxist have upheld a militant cold war anticommunism? Such was the recurring heresy, and Shachtman was merely the last to arrive at it (in a version that combined the Marxist self-description of the Old Guard Socialists with the back room machinations and foreign policy concerns of the Lovestoneites). It was not an unthoughtful position, except that, dogmatist that he always was, the reasoning blinded him, of course, to the human complications of the Vietnam War. But nobody can claim that Shachtman lost his devotion to the working class.

III.

Macdonald's treasured morsel of Trotskyism took him in the other direction, toward a decidedly unconspiratorial anarchism. That direction, too, had its proletarian logic. In the late '30s and '40s in New York, you could still find an anarchist workers' movement probably somewhat larger than Trotskyism (but lacking almost totally in intellectuals), which went on championing the old ideas about libertarian socialism and a society without hierarchy or a state. But the era being what it was, the anarchists mostly had to worry about the fate of their own comrades in Europe. Rescue campaigns were the mission of the moment. After Franco's victory in Spain, Macdonald's first wife, Nancy Macdonald, who worked with him at *Partisan Review* and *Politics*, put together one of those campaigns, a support network for the defeated Spanish fighters (which is a project that she and her colleagues still keep alive under the name of Spanish War Relief). Only rescue campaigns were not enough.

The New York anarchists were by and large immigrant workers, and they had a better idea than either Macdonald or Shachtman what fascism's continuing triumphs would mean, and so they decided, a good many of them, to endorse the Allied war effort, in spite of every anarchist doctrine. Pacifism and the Third Camp were not for them, except in the realm of the philosophical. When the war was over, a diehard minority held out for the revolutionary ideas of yore. But most of them went the same way as Shachtman, but without the theoretical pizzazz, into the sheltering embrace of the Old Guard Socialists and the labor mainstream. And neither of those anarchist impulses, the faintly social democratic nor the diehard revolutionary, appealed to Macdonald.

He figured that, by the mid-'40s, the Dark Ages were upon us willy-nilly, and he responded by taking the anarchist idea and severing it totally from anything resembling either a proletarian logic or a Marxist view of history and progress. In his pamphlet *The Root Is Man* (which ran first as a couple of articles in *Politics* and ought to be reprinted, now that many thousands of American Marxists are putting Macdonald-like questions to themselves), he rejected the idea that history was progressing in a given direction; rejected the idea that any kind of political program could be derived from history's nondirection; rejected the notion that working-class organizations had some special value. Instead he wanted to ask straight out, without reference to theories of history and social class, What makes us unhappy about contemporary society?

The typical Marxist or New Deal liberal of the '30s and '40s blamed the troubles of society on the "anarchy" of capitalist production and looked for solutions in bigness and efficiency. But those solutions were exactly what Macdonald feared. The impersonal and the machinelike were his nightmares. He filled *Politics* with examples of mechanistic brutality and dehumanization. He quoted General Patton's hair-raising speeches to the troops. He pointed to the wartime incarceration of the Japanese-Americans and the enormity of America's use of atomic bombs against Japanese cities ("Götterdämmerung without the gods"). He threw himself into A. Philip Randolph's wartime campaign against racial segregation in the federal government. He wanted individuals to assume a personal responsibility and for everyone to ask, What do I want? And having asked that question on his own behalf, Macdonald found himself publishing the sex essays of Paul Goodman and even a call for gay liberation by the poet Robert Duncan, an extremely early document of its sort.

Years ago Daniel Bell (himself a contributor to Macdonald's magazine

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observed that *Politics* did a better job than any other journal of the time in recording the shifts in moral temper that America was undergoing; and what shows the truth in Bell's observation was the remarkable way in which Macdonald's idiosyncratic frets and worries of the '40s grew up to become, in the '50s and '60s, full-fledged national disasters. For what was McCarthyism, if not the wartime hysterias noted by Macdonald, surviving into a time of peace? What was the war in Vietnam, if not the fanaticism of the ideological machine (Comrade Shachtman's contributions included) gone haywire?

On the good side of the next few years (in my unreconstructed opinion), what was the civil rights revolution, if not Randolph's wartime integration campaign on a grander scale? The sexual revolution and the counterculture of the '60s—surely those were the article-buds about sexual repression that had first come to the attention of American readers in the pages of *Politics*, now in bloom. Up-to-dateness is invariably ahead of its time. The kind of social criticism that C. Wright Mills (another *Politics* writer) and other left-wing sociologists and critical theorists would be writing in later years—the analysis of how individuals are crushed by giant social structures, the triumph of the irrational mass over the lonely thinking individual, the spread of "alienation," "atomization," "thingification"—achieved its original American prominence in *Politics*. The *Politics* version was superior, in fact, because it was humbly journalistic instead of grandiosely theoretical.

Having identified these kinds of issues, Macdonald's brand of non-working-class anarchism accomplished one thing more, which was to dress the radical left in a new style. If Macdonald had a model, it must have been Proudhon, the founder of nineteenth-century anarchism (whose anti-Semitism he was characteristically unable to see, despite a debate over this point in *Politics*). He quoted Herzen, another of his heroes, on the virtues of Proudhon: "His strength lay not in construction but in criticism of the existing state of things." Accordingly, Macdonald drew himself into the posture of a "revolutionist," as he archly put it (except when he drew himself into a liberal posture, or a conservative one, or yogically into all three postures at once), and dispensed with constructive programs altogether.

He was done with *Politics* in 1949, exhausted by the effort, or by the wage demands of the New York printers, or by the fear of Soviet expansion (which made

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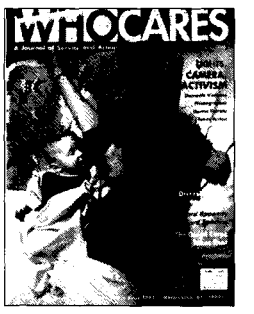

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his anarcho-pacifism look like an exceedingly flimsy foreign policy proposal). And afterward, having liberated himself from the burdens of a political program, he did seem to nail whim to the doorpost. Implicitly he seemed to accept the American system as it was, along with the main principles of the cold war against communism, which was how he ended up unable to prevent himself from receiving a CIA check. Sometimes the acceptance was explicit. "I choose the West" was a memorable line. There were moments when, dazzled by the general air of American optimism and prosperity, he found himself saying that large parts of the program of the classic socialists and anarchists had already, in the fruited plains of America's 1950s, been achieved. "If socialism be the equal sharing of plenty, then we are far along the road," he wrote in *Dissent*, of all places. "We have more of everything a human being can conceivably, and inconceivably, want than Fourier, Proudhon or Marx could have imagined possible."

Yet even then, he was happy to go on railing against American failures and inadequacies with the tone of a revolutionary. He was, at bottom, a pseudo-revolutionary, probably the first pseudo-revolutionary ever to *know* that his revolutionism was pseudo, and to smile at the thought. The revolutionary posture minus a genuine revolutionary program or idea was one more way in which he managed to anticipate the more-cultural-than-political leftism of the '60s. This posture of his managed, of course, to drive his less radical and more radical critics and quite a few of his old friends to apoplexy. In 1968 radical students at Columbia University occupied several of the university buildings and staged a strike that had all the qualities of a pseudo-revolution, and Macdonald wandered around the campus urging the students on, as might have been expected; and even today there are people who look back on that spectacle and shudder.

In a recent issue of *Commentary*, one of Macdonald's old colleagues, Gertrude Himmelfarb, who worked side by side with him at *Encounter* during the unfortunate period when the CIA was secretly paying the bills, recalls with horror the scene of Macdonald visiting students who were not only occupying the office of Columbia's president but were sinking so far into barbarism as to pee out the president's windows. Himmelfarb cites Diana Trilling as her source in regard to the detail about the president's windows, and tells us that Macdonald said: "If anybody's windows can be peed out of, it's his windows. He was a big stuffed shirt and of course they got rid of him, thank God."

As it happens, I was myself, as a college freshman, one of the hardened revolutionaries who had taken over the president's office. I spent a week sleeping on the president's carpet and sitting on top of his desk, and I cannot remember anyone peeing out the window, though it should be conceded that several dozen of us were inhabiting the office, and there was only one toilet (and besides, the office was on the second floor, and beneath the windows milled a crowd of people not all of whom were our supporters ...). But I do remember Macdonald, the white-haired Trotsky lookalike. He stood under the southernmost window one day and shouted at us: "What are you doing up there?" We passed down a leaflet listing our demands, which called for an end to university cooperation with the Vietnam War, an end to construction of a gymnasium that was found to be offensive by the leaders of Harlem and so forth. Those were sacred demands to us, drawn up through painful deliberations involving several hundred people, all of whom had agreed to gamble their student careers and perhaps much else on behalf of the life-and-death principles that were now inscribed on our leaflet. He studied the list and coolly looked up again and said: "Is that all?" A wonderful man! At one of our mass rallies he made a speech complaining about the paucity of anarchist black flags in our demonstrations, which was a kindly way of warning us not to fall for Marxism-Leninism and non-pseudo-revolutionism.

Most of his later writing was cultural criticism for *The New Yorker* and *Esquire*. He was consistently an elitist, though like Shachtman's Third Camp, the elitism roamed hither and thither over the years. At Yale in his student days he presented himself as a literary dandy looking down on his professorial inferiors. As a '30s revolutionary he stood with Trotsky as the champion of artistic modernism and the European high literary canon. Next he was an Anglophile, sometimes a "conservative" or a "traditionalist" (whence Wreszin's title, *A Rebel in Defense of Tradition*). But it is hard to take any of those postures too seriously today. His major effort at expounding a theory of cultural elitism, "Masscult & Midcult," published in 1960, lays out a rigid distinction between High Culture (good), commercial culture or "masscult" (bad) and commercial "midcult" efforts to water down High Culture for a popular audience (worst); and the sharpness of the distinction makes the whole analysis too rigid by half. He didn't like rock 'n' roll (and just when it was getting interesting, too). He was upset that a dignified poet such as Robert Frost would horse around in public. It was an uptight essay.

Some part of him couldn't have believed it himself. He did spend six years writing film reviews in *Esquire*, which was an unlikely job for someone who viewed midcult as a threat to mankind. Yet elitism the posture, if not elitism the theory, made him a giant among scourges. Trotsky's advice about whips and magazines never fell on more fertile ground. There were the famous essays about the New Revised Bible, Webster's Third New International Dictionary, the best-sellers and the Great Books, where he took the midcult enthusiasm for uplift and verbal reform and flayed the nasty thing to death, and the flaying was so delightful that decades later the world is still having its chuckle.

Wreszin's biography, at nearly 600 pages, is a towering oak of a book, which is to say, it is sturdy, long and wooden. Macdonald never had to flee into exile, never plotted a syndicalist uprising and generally lived the life of an American writer whose most exciting experience was to break up with wife No. 1 and fall in love with wife No. 2, only in the wrong order with a couple of nude cocktail parties in between; and for that reason the biography is deeply dull. Wreszin's great mistake was to refrain from quoting Macdonald at length, apart from a few letters from Macdonald to his closest friend Nicola Chiaromonte. There used to be a style of writing literary biographies, the style of the *American* (or *English*) *Men of Letters Series* at the turn of the century that consisted of lengthy quotations strung together with explanatory narrative and biographical details. It was a style that might have served a witty journalist like Macdonald. But biographically ours is the age of the pyramids.

Wreszin's purpose is to find a model of an American leftist who was keenly radical and yet undeceived on the topic of communism, and in Macdonald he has found a very fine model—too fine, from his own point of view. Wreszin's preferred radicalism is definitely *non-* Communist, but Macdonald's impulse reached beyond a passive *non-* to an active *anti-*, at which the biographer takes fright. The names of Arthur Schlesinger Jr. and Sidney Hook slink across the page, and the biographer shudders in horror at the power-mad friends and sinister anti-Communists (as they seem to him) with whom Macdonald's politics excesses led him to deal. Was Henry Wallace all that bad, Wreszin wants to know

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despite "his apologetics for the Soviet Union"? Couldn't Macdonald have been more like I. F. Stone (whom Macdonald called a "Stalinoid," though he sometimes admired him)? Couldn't he and his fellow anti-Communist left-wingers have avoided giving "aid and comfort to the right"?

Something about Macdonald this biographer doesn't get. Still, the impulse that led Wreszin to look for a left-wing hero among the anti-Communists is commendable in the extreme, and distinctly up-to-date, which is to say, it will be a wave of the future (it will have to be, everything considered) among the left-wing historians who until just now have scoured the archives for the heroes of American pro-communism. And there is an agreeable quality in Wreszin's emotional relation to his subject. Macdonald was always an irritating figure in some people's eyes, and in his last years, when he wrote less and drank more, the number of the irritated grew. One time he violently shoved his second wife in a parking lot because she was foolish enough to say that she found Joseph Conrad a bore, and passersby were so alarmed that they called the police, which is heartbreaking to see recorded for all posterity in Wreszin's pages.

Obviously the biographer feels sorry about the personal problems that afflicted Macdonald (and therefore the family and friends) at the end. But he never doubts that Macdonald's life should be judged by the public achievements, which were always great enough, even if Macdonald himself often felt otherwise. And so Macdonald's last years were hard, but Wreszin's last pages are lyrical. There are leaves on top of that very tall tree. Wreszin spent ten years writing and researching the book, and it speaks well of him and of Macdonald both that, by the end, the biographer still felt a vivid sympathy and affection for the formidable critic who had been wrong on so many big issues, and right on so many others, and had never maneuvered for personal advantage, and was always lively, and loved the English language to excess. •

The Devil in the Details

BY JOSEPH LEO KOERNER

Outcasts: Signs of Otherness in Northern European Art of the Late Middle Ages by Ruth Mellinkoff

(University of California Press, two volumes, $195)

During the late Middle Ages in northern Europe, church space became the setting for elaborate spectacles of cruelty and pain. In Arras, France, a play re-enacting Christ's Passion was performed in church over several days, and it consisted largely in detailing, in tens of thousands of verse-lines, a gruesome regimen of torture. Bound to a column, Christ was mocked and scourged; unbound, he was stripped, blindfolded, bludgeoned, crowned with thorns and robed in purple; then his beard was plucked, along with chunks of flesh, and when his wounds had crusted, his robe was torn off, opening them afresh.

One scene showed Christ, by now a bloody mass, as the target in a spitting contest waged between his Jewish tormentors, who bet on hitting specific features of Christ's face with their spittle. This bizarre episode, common in the period's literature, was one of many apocryphal tortures invented to fill out the Gospels' laconic reports of Christ's arrest, trial and crucifixion. It served a fervent Passion mysticism that blamed the Jews for Christ's death and used his death, and the torments before it, as objects of pious "contemplation" and "compassion." And like most such fictive torments, the spitting contest was fabricated from a specific episode in Scripture (Hur's suffocation by spittle in Exodus 32) believed to prefigure exegeses of events in the Christian New Testament. Thus, by shuffling texts, Christians took the Jews as the "source" of the fiction that would condemn them.

In French Passion Plays, the torturers often spoke rondeau verses, with only two rhymes throughout, and with opening words used twice as refrain. Such patterning gives their spitting game, which was probably acted as a wild dance, the aspect of a rite. The late medieval Church alleged that contemporary Jews, supposedly like their ancestors in Christ's time, still ritually murdered Christians and desecrated eucharistic Hosts. The spitting game, and all the violent pseudo-ceremonies that Christ silently withstood, thus would have appeared to churchgoers like a behind-the-scenes glimpse of an abominal but living sacrificial cult.

The Arras play cannot communicate the hectic violence of its live performance; the Protestant reformer Philipp Melanchthon, writing in the sixteenth century, recalls that an actor was once killed playing Christ in a Passion scene. Nor can the play now convey the hatred that it elicited in its original viewers, when cruelty falsely attributed to Jews could translate into violent pogroms against them. This vicious circle is better evident in the visual arts. In a series of Passion images from the 1480s preserved in a codex in Berlin, a Nuremberg artist draws Christ as a mere contour of black lines filled in with wild strokes of blood-red paint. For the spitting contest, the artist renders spittle in whitish body-color caked over where Christ's features might be. The torturers are similarly defaced, although not by the artist. Some later viewer has attacked the picture itself, jabbing away pieces of page showing the torturers' faces. The blows struck against Christ, rendered crudely by the artist to suit the scandal of the depicted deed, here occasioned in their audience crude blows against Christ's enemies in effigy. Image and reception join in one rondeau.

Ugly deeds done by ugly people who are the ugly fantasies of a society set on maintaining itself as beautiful: these are the hideous subjects of a fascinating new compendium by Ruth Mellinkoff. *Outcasts* is an enormous book. It is richly researched, handsomely designed, lavishly produced. Opened up, it is a vast atlas of hate, a picture-album of some 600 monstrous images gorgeously reproduced in color. Flipping through these images makes channel-surfing through slasher films and "true crime" television seem tame.

In *Outcasts*, ugly is as ugly does. On the one hand, flesh is beaten, flayed, sliced, eviscerated, nailed, drilled, boiled and burned. On the other hand, the flesh of the torturers is itself variously deformed, distorted, diseased and blemished by (in Mellinkoff's litany) "warts, moles, boils, pimples, freckles, sores, cuts and scars . . . lumps and bumps . . . wens and goiters." Sometimes the two coalesce, as in a panel of the "Arrest of Christ," circa 1485, by the South German painter Wolfgang Katzheimer, where a large sore on the leg of a man hauling on Christ's

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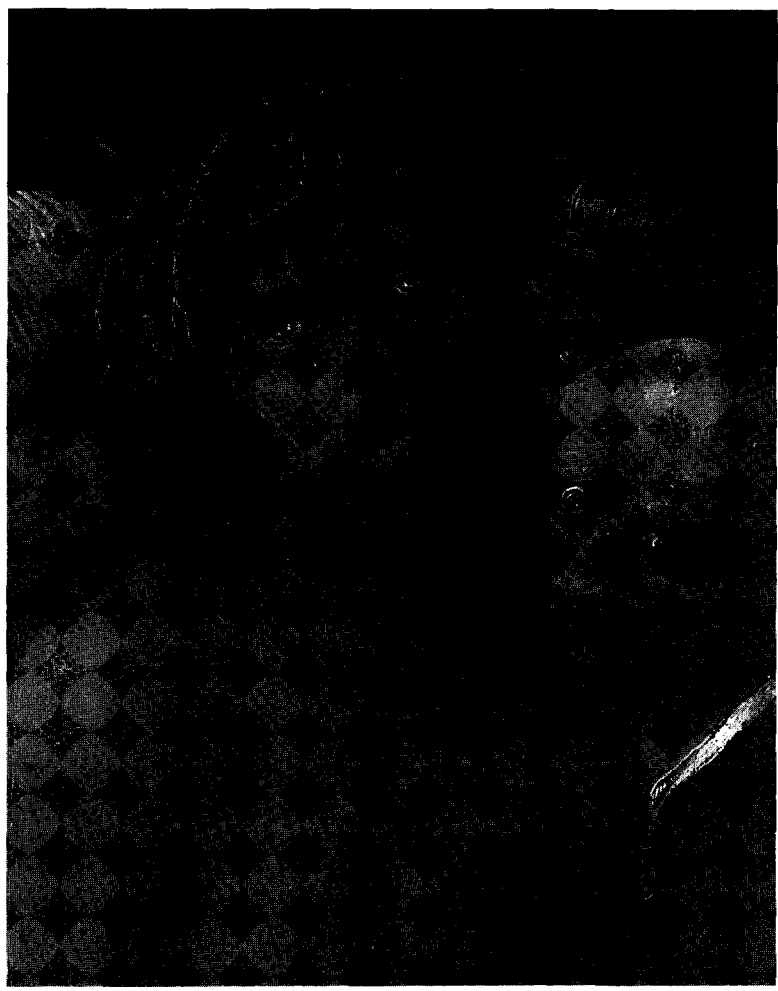
noose is shown bursting under the pressure of the action. Christ's head in the noose thus becomes equivalent to a boil come to a head.

Pictures like Katzheimer's are hard to see. Tasteless by modern standards, and far removed from the idealizing aesthetics of early Italian painting and the brilliant hyper-realism of the great Netherlandish masters, these weird, obscene works, largely German in origin, have traditionally been excluded from surveys of medieval and Renaissance art. Almost never reproduced, they hang unnoticed, often in poor physical condition, in obscure churches, depositories and the period rooms of local museums. Within late medieval Christian culture, though, these objects adorned the most sacred and visible of all places: the altar where Christ, in the Mass, becomes fully present in the eucharistic Host. While Mellinkoff draws her illustrations from many media, from manuscript illumination and ivory to glass and metal, the dark stars of her study are painted altarpiece panels such as Katzheimer's.



Courtesy Suermondt Museum, Aachen; photo: Anne Gold

ECCE HOMO, HANS HOFFMANN (16TH CENTURY)

Mellinkoff gathers these objects into a grotesque corpus, the historical significance of which can now at last be explored. She does not treat these pictures as the unique aesthetic creations they are, each with its own distinctive visual and narrative style. Nor does she study their general religious function: how, where and why they were originally used, and what links they might have had to pious practices generally. On these matters she cites previous literature, such as James Marrow's excellent work on Passion iconography (oddly, she ignores the relevant scholarship of Caroline Bynum, who has focused on the grotesque body in medieval piety). Mellinkoff's achievement is to isolate, to catalog and to explain the signs in these pictures that label certain actors as others, that is, as "despised, disreputable and belittled" people within Christian society.

She divides these signs first between the categories "costume" and "body," and then into subcategories and sub-subcategories ("patterns," "colors," "skin blemishes," "heads," "teeth," "eyes" and so on). Thus each sign can receive its own brief, self-enclosed excursus on pictorial usage, moral associations, historical development and relation to real life. Erudite, unpretentious and interesting to read, these local discussions show Mellinkoff's great strengths as a historian. For the last quarter-century, and working as an independent scholar, Mellinkoff has produced a spate of books and articles on individual signs of infamy in medieval culture: the mark of Cain, the horned Moses, Judas's red hair, riding backward, Jewish headgear, chamberpots and the like. Her new work condenses these, along with new material, into one magnum opus with a single unifying framework.

Mellinkoff's precursor is perhaps Eduard Fuchs, the great early-century collector and historian of caricature, erotica, costume and custom, whose works Walter Benjamin famously reviewed in 1937. Himself an impassioned compiler, Benjamin praised Fuchs the collector over Fuchs the historian. The collector Fuchs, Benjamin argued, redefined "culture" by publishing images from outside culture's traditional borders. These images made vivid Benjamin's axiom that "there never is a document of culture that is not simultaneously a document of barbarism." The historian Fuchs, by contrast, divided up his images into "sick" and "healthy," "ripe" and "rotten," and wrote with them a story of progress toward the good, thus reinstating those very borders over which his images had transgressed. Put simply, Fuchs's illustrations told a far more radical story than did his text. This criticism, as well as Benjamin's long homage to the collector of outcast images, applies to Mellinkoff as well.

At one level, Mellinkoff's book is meant as a sort of selective glossary—a "sourcebook to be read selectively" rather than "straight through"—of the visual language of otherness current in a single historical society, that of late medieval northern Christian Europe. At another level, *Outcasts* aspires to offer a glimpse of that society as reflected in images of those whom it expels. Believing "that society's most profound views are more clearly revealed if we look at the darker side," Mellinkoff has sought out "the ignoble people and pariahs" by using "a method that has not ... been used before." This "method" consists of spotting and properly decoding individual "signs of otherness." What is "revealed" is a society itself peculiarly eager to magnify, vilify and, if necessary, invent such signs.

This signifying process is nowhere more elaborate than in the case of the Jews. Mellinkoff locates the vilifying circle of signs that cast Jews out and coded them as evil. Christians believed that Jews evidenced their evil physically, in tails, horns, hooked noses and bodily distortions generally. But because they did not in fact bear these marks, Jews were often forced by Christian laws from the thirteenth century to wear artificial signs (special badges, headgear, colors). Worn in Christian art by biblical perpetrators of evil, these signs were not presented as the enforced stigma they actually were, but as the Jews' own secret code. Certain anti

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Semitic icons (such as the round-topped tables of the Jewish law) were, over time, even assumed by the Jewish community itself.

Thus victims become villains and villains become victims: the outcast Jews appear in art as casting out Christ and the Christians. In a powerful (and inevitable) moment of her book, Mellinkoff reflects on yellow as a stigmatizing sign of the Jew in the seventh-century Islamic world, medieval Western Europe, eighteenth-century Austria under Maria Theresa, France under the ancien régime and the Greater German Reich under Hitler: "Yellow color had absorbed the tainted associations of this persecuted people, whom yellow color had stained—a vicious circle, a painful reciprocity lasting more than 700 years."

The continued currency of certain "signs of otherness" long beyond the historical period named in Mellinkoff's subtitle endows *Outcasts*, justly, with special interest. Yet it also has encouraged her to inflate unnecessarily the ostensible subject of her book, thereby obfuscating the real coherence of the corpus she has so successfully assembled. In an introductory section titled "Place and Time," Mellinkoff announces that her "focus and emphasis ... is on northwestern European art, with limited and brief excursions into the art of southern and eastern Europe." She endorses a regional focus rather than a temporal one because, as she puts it, "the history of mankind reports the triumph of place over time. Topography and geography have had a larger and longer claim on minds than has time. Witness the still powerful differences between the Orient and the West."

I will leave aside here the tired and sloppy distinction between the "Orient" and the "West," which anyway is out of tune with the book's moral undersong. Mellinkoff seems to say here that her book, while its subtitle specifies the "late Middle Ages," in fact encompasses a much longer duration, one that might be "still powerful" today. And in the next paragraph she excuses her book's narrow range of examples as a function, merely, of their convenient lucidity. Her illustrations are taken from medieval art because society's attitudes towards the ignoble people are often displayed more clearly during the late Middle Ages"; and they are chiefly from northern areas (Germany, Holland and Flanders) because of their bold realism and expressiveness."

It would seem, then, that the only thing special about the grotesque corpus reproduced in *Outcasts* is the accuracy

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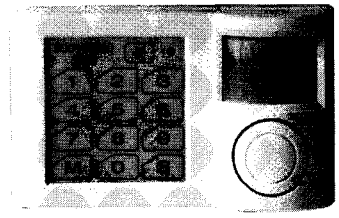

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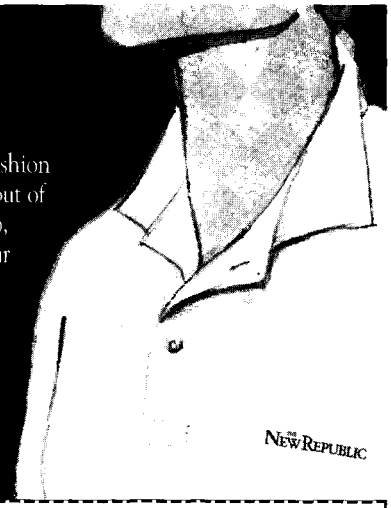

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with which it reproduces attitudes northwestern Europeans shared and share. Rarely has late medieval "realism" been given a more literal reading. And this from a writer whose scholarship otherwise proves so well the phantasmagoric nature of the signs that she studies.

Mellinkoff does a disservice to her own corpus by placing it in a historical framework larger than it has. What is impressive about the images collected in *Outcasts* is not at all their cultural range—their dark center remains southern German, anti-Semitic, religious panel painting at the eve of the Reformation—but rather the staggering scope of obscure and wholly "unrealistic" imaginings concocted by one small culture to vilify an even smaller minority, the Jews. Mellinkoff's text would have been stronger if she had accepted and properly explained the place and the time of her illustrations, as well as their true subject as signs of "Jewishness" rather than of "otherness" generally. For it is only by studying why these images of this people appeared within this region and period that one can begin to fathom the continuities that terrify us still.

On a more local level, Mellinkoff's expanded framework sometimes erases historical differences among sources, as when Goethe, cited for his thoughts about the color yellow, is chided for not confirming his hypothesis "by the evidence," as if he were some unreliable scholar publishing in the 1980s. Sometimes the framework overpowers the example, as when the writer has to assure us that "cross-eyes as an attribute for evil figures is not peculiar to [Rueland] Frueauf [the Elder] and his circle." More broadly, the outsize subject-boundaries that Mellinkoff projects for her material invite undue demands for comprehensiveness: missing, we are bound to feel, are discussions of outcast women, witches, children, blacks (they receive half a page), Muslims and foreigners generally. And the discussion of peasants as "others" is unsatisfying, both in the visual material presented and in the exegesis it receives. Mellinkoff merely reiterates the banal view that in high art the lower orders are despised.

Mellinkoff openly admits to these gaps and these weaknesses, and she concludes her book with an invitation to others to fill them: "Many of these signs may be expanded and traced more exhaustively—both chronologically and geographically; and there are a host of other signs waiting to be explored." I do not believe that this is the reception that *Outcasts* will receive. Its historical framework seems too shaky, its understanding of art's reflection of society too crude, and its method too rudimentary for it to serve as the ground plan for future local studies. Rather than filling in blanks around the margins, readers will want to return to the book's terrible and still unexplored vortex: those altarpieces to Christ tortured by the Jews.

Here the outcasts are easy to spot, since they are the ones causing pain. Their ugliness, expressed in bizarre profiles, bright colors, angular limbs and oozing sores painted lovingly like jewels, is caught up in their wickedness as in an exotic dance or rite. And because the style in which the whole spectacle is painted strikes us moderns as "savage," as "other" to our norms of art, we read this ugliness as a verdict on an epoch. The Middle Ages, we conclude, were dark, ignorant, cruel and irrational, indeed proof (to set against the timeless and beautiful "classical" age) that the past is strange.

Medieval art has always been appreciated less for its beauty than for its ugliness. Gothicism of the eighteenth century, and Romanticism of the nineteenth century, loved it for its sublime grotesqueness, and championed it not as an alternative ideal of beauty to set against antiquity but as primary evidence that all ideals are historical and relative. And because medieval art was irrational, ugly and heterogeneous—the fallen expression of fallenness—it was also deemed closer to the real. That is why Victor Hugo, in his *Preface to Cromwell* in 1827, fashioned modern realism as a renaissance of the medieval grotesque. Even the medieval period itself, which had no aesthetics in our modern sense, no account, that is, of beauty as particular to art, interpreted its highest expressions as cultivating the low, the hideous, the outcast. For at the center of its sacred text, of its altars, rites and dramas, was the ruined body of Christ as Man of Sorrows: once God's perfect image and likeness, now the ugliest of all creatures.

Mellinkoff omits the deformed Christ from her glossary of signs, arguing that her subjects are "ordinary mortals." And she somewhat blurs her historical picture of these "other" mortals by not circumscribing and studying them as, first and foremost for medieval Christian culture, the Jews. Without a clear account of both elements in the system of semantic inversion that defined the boundaries of medieval society—the ugly Jewish man-god and the ugly Jewish men-demons—the signs of otherness will remain obscure. Mellinkoff has gathered a corpus far narrower than her text suggests, but also far more powerful. Thanks to her great labors as a collector and a glossator, others can now explore not only what these signs mean, but also how they mean.

JOSEPH LEO KOERNER is the author most recently of *The Moment of Self-Portraiture in German Renaissance Art* (University of Chicago Press).

With God On Our Side

BY SEAN WILENTZ

Cosmos Crumbling: American Reform and the Religious Imagination by Robert H. Abzug

(Oxford University Press, 285 pp., $30)

Religious devotion has profoundly shaped the history of radicalism and reform movements in the United States. Lately the impression has grown, however, that American liberals and their allies in the mass media harbor a condescending mistrust of public piety, especially in politics. Promoting his newly published "spiritual memoirs," Andrew Young recently repeated the point and claimed that it held true thirty years ago within the civil rights movement. "Even then, see, people didn't want to think of Martin Luther King as a minister," Young recalled. "Most of our white supporters kind of tolerated our religion, but they really didn't take it seriously, and most of the press, too."

How true this impression is depends on what Young and others mean by taking religion seriously. The fact that King and many of his top associates were ministers certainly didn't hinder their cause among nonbelievers or nominal Jews and Christians. On the contrary, it gave the civil rights movement a measure of moral authority, even grandeur, that other talented spokesmen and organizers in its ranks could never muste

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King's prophecies of freedom, justice and deliverance uplifted the most secular of secular humanists, in ways that the finest speeches by A. Philip Randolph or Roy Wilkins or Bayard Rustin did not. And although King always made a great deal of his philosophical debt to Gandhian nonviolence, it was impossible to miss how his movement's tactics (deployed to the strains of "We Shall Overcome") were deeply rooted in black American Protestantism.

Still, if the civil rights cause, in common with earlier causes, relied on a projected spirituality, there remained latent distinctions between secularists who were moved by the spirit and believers for whom that spirit truly was a holy manifestation. The distinctions have become clearer in retrospect, following the rise of the religious right. So long as scriptural utterances comported with their own politics, liberals could be easily inspired and bow their heads while others prayed. But once those utterances came from the mouths of conservatives and reactionaries (let alone religious extremists such as David Koresh), they became evidence of fanaticism—and a great liberal outcry ensued, charging that religious appeals have no place in American public life.

This is not necessarily hypocrisy. (When it comes to hypocritical uses of religious rhetoric, and the attendant trivialization of religion, the political wizards of the recent American right have been peerless.) The problem is deeper and more interesting, and it is almost epistemological. Inside what Stephen Carter has called, a bit grandiosely, the "culture of disbelief," the desires and the designs of people driven by religious awe and duty are nearly incomprehensible. It is much easier for secular liberals to presume that right-wing piety is merely a cover for racism, homophobia, misogyny or some other abomination than it is for them to credit devout believers trying to handle moral dilemmas. What ought to be respectful fights over politics turn into disrespectful fights over religion. But even regarding causes close to their own hearts, secularists have never quite been able to see people such as King as these people see themselves—as evangelists, anointed by the Holy Spirit, preaching God's word to the poor and downcast, "just like Jesus did," as Young remarks, "just like Isaiah."

Robert H. Abzug's book treats the distant origins of modern American reformism in the explosion of reform crusades that preceded (and hastened) the coming of the Civil War—the decades when the association between reform and evangelical faith solidified. The book's major contribution is to confront the academy's version of the culture of disbelief. Too often, Abzug contends, historians have described the religious aspects of antebellum reform as masks for some underlying secular motivation or anxiety. Put more bluntly, they have sociologized the hell (and the heaven) out of evangelical reform, searching for some supposedly rational economic, psychological or political motive to explain what they can perceive only as irrational religious ideas and behavior. Consequently, he charges, they have misperceived the people and the events that they study—interpreting religious events in worldly terms while writing about reformers who interpreted worldly events in religious terms. To set things right, he takes enormous pains to elucidate the crusading religious visions of the antebellum era with the utmost respect and detachment.

Abzug focuses on developments in New England and portions of western New York State and Ohio that were settled by transplanted New Englanders—areas long recognized by historians as the epicenters of antebellum reform. Here and there, he unearths some interesting (if, to modern eyes, quixotic) leaders and movements that previous historical surveys have slighted. He devotes half a chapter to the manual reform movement of the 1830s, which tried to get northern seminaries and colleges to include strenuous farm chores (woodchopping, cow-milking) in their curricula. Thanks to Abzug, the fiery New School Presbyterian leader Nathan S. S. Beman (who was known to command his congregants to depart and go to hell if they would not accept Christ's tender mercies) at last receives the attention he deserves. For the most part, however, Abzug returns to the reformist currents (including the temperance, Sabbath reform and abolitionist movements) that have preoccupied historians of antebellum reform for more than half a century.

All of these movements emanated a particular type of evangelical piety that began to arise after 1800 among younger Yankee Congregationalists and Presbyterians. This new evangelicalism originated in a spiritual crisis that followed in the wake of dramatic secular changes: the rise of democratic political parties; the formalization of religious freedom (and the disestablishment of the old clerical Standing Order); the market revolution that overturned the eighteenth-century rural republic of gentry and yeomen, and that brought the nation to the brink of commercial greatness. The combined impact of these developments splintered the patriarchal structures of public and private authority that generations of New England Calvinists had taken for granted as God's design. In response, a new generation of religious virtuosi and their followers (primarily women and men of the up-and-coming commercial middle class) reshaped their sacred communal identity and forged a perfectionist piety that was hospitable to new types of social reform.

The key theological change involved a softening of orthodox Calvinism's doctrine of predestination. Abandoning the stern faith of their forebears, younger New England Presbyterians and Congregationalists began to regard every human being as a moral free agent, capable of reaching salvation through prayer and a personal conversion experience. "God requires men to make themselves a new heart on pain of eternal death," thundered Charles Finney, the greatest of the Yankee evangelists; and that very requirement, he continued, was "the strongest evidence that they are able to do it." Toward that end, the new evangelicals generated a series of spectacular mass revivals, borrowing selectively from the liturgical techniques of what had been, before the American Revolution, the region's dissenting evangelical sects, above all the Methodists.

In bearing the burdens of personal spiritual accountability, the followers of Finney and other so-called Effort Calvinists scrutinized every aspect of their daily lives, beginning with their domestic arrangements. Men whose fathers and grandfathers had assumed Jehovah-like authority over wives and children surrendered themselves to a merciful Redeemer, and acceded authority over child-rearing and other household responsibilities to their wives. Those wives, encouraged by the preachers, became moral overseers of their children—and in many households, of their reluctant, spiritually lukewarm husbands.

While these sanctified households laid the spiritual foundations for what would later become middle-class Yankee domesticity, legions of evangelicals also turned outward, toward new religious and social causes. They beheld human affairs as a Manichaean struggle between darkness and light. Yet their own progress to conversion proved to them that the struggle was no simple unfolding of an inscrutable Providence. Its outcome depended, rather, on the actions of autonomous, responsible human beings. Believing and acting correctly, and getting others to do so, was a Christian's duty, not only for benevolent reasons but because it would speed up the arrival of the millennium of earthly perfection that the evangelicals believed would precede the Second Coming of Christ.

Thus inspired, evangelicals took up missionizing and moral efforts on an unprecedented scale. Their congregations started Sunday schools for future

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Christians and helped tract distribution societies spread the gospel to rich and poor alike. New organizations sprang up to demand observation of the Sabbath, to help get drunkards off the bottle and to reclaim the scarred souls of teenage prostitutes. Some evangelicals talked of forming a Christian party in politics, to occupy the place once held by the pious Federalists and to defeat the godless political armies supposedly unleashed by Thomas Jefferson. Although the partisan efforts faltered, the evangelicals' zeal helped define the politics of the emergent Whig Party in New England and its western hinterland.

For a minority of radical evangelicals, however, these measures did not go nearly far enough. If individual conversion and Christian perfection originated in moral autonomy, as these evangelicals believed they did, then any human relation that ever slightly impeded autonomy and accountability was unholy. Compromise with those sinners and their accomplices who justified such relations was unthinkable. Vanquishing sin required a thorough assault on Satan's strongholds and on all forms of sinful coercion.

Within the temperance and Sunday-observance movements, this radical logic bred costly dissension. More famously, in the early 1830s it hastened the rise of immediatist abolitionism, with its attacks on slavery's interposition of profane human power between enslaved blacks and Jesus Christ. And by the late 1830s the logic led some radicals in and around the abolitionist movement to question the subjugation of women, both in traditional marriage and in the mainstream evangelical domestic alternative. In short, the radicals began taking aim at some of the nation's central institutions—and thereby created schisms in the empire of evangelical reform and foreshadowed future revolutions in American life.

Abzug interprets this history as a series of cosmological breakthroughs. Repeatedly, he moves beyond the fine points of theological disputation and reform-movement strategizing and finds deeper impulses to sacralize the world. He is particularly interested in reform rituals such as the temperance pledge—ceremonies, he claimed, that affirmed new loyalties to the united front of evangelical reform. The rituals, in turn, reinforced the reformers' sense of themselves as actors in a sacred drama, one that dissolved all distinctions between the spiritual and the secular.

At the grandest, metahistorical level, the reformers' drama updated and expanded the Puritan conception of New Englanders as an elect, covenanted people. Now they claimed that the covenant covered the entire United States, all of whose people bore a special responsibility to eliminate sin and thus sustain their choiceness in God's eyes. At more intimate levels, the evangelicals engaged in ceaseless self-examination, judging their thoughts and their habits by the standards of Christian restraint and devotion, taking stock of their everyday activities (and those of others) by the light of Scripture. Their judgments were not always congenial, and the reformers delivered them in ways that others found obnoxiously smug and meddlesome. But at its most creative, Abzug suggests, reformist piety was more self-examining than it was self-satisfied, prompting a continuing interrogation of one's own failings, and of how they contributed to the sinful false hierarchies of this world.

Viewed this way, many of the key evangelical reform movements, including temperance, Sabbath reform and the more radical varieties of what Abzug calls the body reforms (preeminently the dietary system of Sylvester Graham, he of the famous cracker), all become comprehensible as efforts to reorder daily life and make it comport with the sacred drama—turning the most elementary aspects of existence, including eating and drinking, into occasions for holy invocation. (For some reason, Abzug says relatively little about another element of life that concerned reformers greatly, sexual intercourse. Evangelical disapproval of the male power and endless procreation of the traditional secular order prompted the anti-prostitution campaigns, reinforced the body reform movements and inspired a number of communitarian experiments, most notably John Humphrey Noyes's perfectionist Oneida Community.)

Above all, Abzug's reformers, moderates and radicals alike, shared a pietistic style that was obsessively committed to self-control and self-improvement as well as to improving the world. The case of Beriah Green, a pioneer in manual labor reform who went on to become an important abolitionist, exemplified the style and its inner workings. As an overworked seminarian and part-time teacher at Andover, Green was prone to debilitating illnesses—until he discovered an invigorating regimen of incantation, physical labor and holy communion. "I keep both ears open to the voice of nature," he related: "I have heard her cry, till the voice becomes a shriek, 'To the woodpile! To the woodpile! To the woodpile NOW!' Each morning Green would wash his face and feel "the inward promptings of the kind monitor" bidding him to bless God for the existence of free cold water. At other times of the day, "an invisible hand seemed to touch him, "setting me free from the lassitude and fatigue, which was crippling and oppressing me!"

In the most radical circles, meanwhile, this style spiraled out into an ever widening gyre of perfectionism, relentless in its search for human sin and just as relentless in its efforts to eradicate that sin and to reclaim its victims. No human designed hierarchy—including, some came to suspect, Linnaean biologic hierarchies—seemed to be above radical criticism. "Even the insect world was to be defended," the bemused if sympathetic Ralph Waldo Emerson recalled of the New England reformers, "and a socie

Donkeys

Sky attaches itself to land like a grief
Heavily moored.
In a blue that is not forgotten,
Neither sky nor land may be forgiven.
One red-eye swims tearful at dawn, the other
Blinks as stars ask questions.

Today is good daylight. Rain
Will not cry all over the donkeys
As they walk like small grey sins, veterans of grief.
Nameless and ageless.
I do not feel sorry for them. Grey with guilt,
They nuzzle at bleak corners of nettles

And never speak. But move like confessions,
Half-ashamed in the wind.
I see birds ignore them.
Crows black in mourning, and a sheepdog
Lashes across a field never noticing.
Pinned in grey moulding,

They pass the day.
Light is a sort of compromise,
Cloud stands white as death.
Still they treasure memories of Jerusalem,
When their hooves struck stars from the ground,
While the sun shouted greetings.

In this sparse place of worship
They are forgotten. I fear
They may be suicidal.
The sky is no benediction,
They graze and wait for death.

SUE LENIER

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for the protection of ground-worms, slugs and mosquitoes was to be incorporated without delay."

At a quick glance, much of this begins to look eerily reminiscent of some of the reformist and radical spirits of our own time—not just the witness-bearing civil rights and anti-war movements of the 1960s, but also some of the quirkier recent personal liberation movements and fads. But the story of how the religious dramaturgy of the antebellum decades survived (albeit transformed) into the twentieth century is a complicated one. Abzug alludes to it and then wisely backs off. (He promises a companion volume on post-Civil War reform movements and their changing religious character.) Instead he leaves a revised picture of antebellum reform, but one with important limitations—limitations that are all too common in the rest of the scholarly literature, with its singular emphasis on the reforming New England pietists.

Although he is full of ideas about the origins and development of evangelical reform, Abzug makes only passing observations about why some movements succeeded better than others. He notes, for example, that although the temperance movement may not have reached its most utopian teetotal goals, it did help effect a dramatic decline in the consumption of alcohol, especially in the North, between 1800 and 1850 (not unlike the decline in cigarette smoking over the past thirty years). The abolitionists, although hardly the only ones responsible for slavery's destruction, and although failures at eradicating racial prejudice, could look back on their lives (as William Lloyd Garrison did in 1865) and be grateful to God and to each other for their accomplishments. But why did these movements succeed where others failed? And why did those that succeeded not succeed faster and more thoroughly than they did? Clearly, some reform efforts touched a nerve among non-evangelicals and even anti-evangelicals, whereas others (notably Sabbatarianism) struck outsiders as idiosyncratic, domineering and narrowly religious. More important, the most successful movements, above all abolitionism, were those that raised fundamental political issues—issues that, once politicized, could not be evaded by the nation's leaders.

These matters loom even larger because Abzug ignores some of the most important movements of the age—the world of Jacksonian reformers outside of and often antagonistic to) the evangelical drama. Like most historians, Abzug virtually conflates antebellum reform with evangelical reform. Yet entire chapters of the social and political history of the period were written by reformers with little or no religious devotion or by pious people who thought that the Yankee evangelicals were at war with the constitutional separation of church and state. The rise of the nation's first labor reform movements, the completion of the democratic suffrage for white men, the expansion of anti-slavery from a marginal cause to a mass political movement—all demand a larger canvas than Abzug's. The effect of his method is to skew the history of American reform toward Yankee, middle-class, Whiggish types, and to identify the nation's salvation exclusively with religious impulses. And this makes it all the harder to understand the dynamics of social and political change before 1860—including why some reformers succeeded and others failed.

Nor does Abzug fully discuss the darker, intolerant side of evangelical reform that did so much to alienate others. Yankee evangelical piety could be heroically liberal on some issues, especially slavery and race, but illiberal on others. Abzug notes how, in their Manichaeanism, both Beecher and Finney damned Catholics, along with Deists, Unitarians and Episcopalians, as Satan's soldiers. The temperance movement took a more ecumenical view, as Abzug shows, but anti-Catholicism turned up continually among the abolitionists. "The whole defense of African slavery is Popish," the abolitionist Reverend Samuel Crothers declared, "both in its origin and spirit." It was no wonder that Irish Catholic immigrants, who already harbored racist disdain for blacks, did not look upon the abolitionists as friends. And it was no wonder that northern Jacksonian Democrats, who *did* embrace Catholics, viewed the evangelicals not as egalitarian reformers but as self-righteous religious bullies. Nor, somewhat later, was it surprising that those northern Democrats who turned anti-slavery also distanced themselves from more moralistic abolitionists.

Finally, Abzug's concentration on Yankee reform piety tends to cramp an appreciation of the varieties of antebellum evangelicalism. As historians of the American South have been pointing out for some time, evangelical Protestantism assumed numerous forms before 1860, including the Southern Methodist and Baptist faiths (white and black) that were either untouched by the Yankee revivalists or were actively hostile to them. Yet even in the North, the great revivals of the early nineteenth century exploded mainly among plebeian believers who resented the Yankee evangelicals' self-assigned role as the vanguard of moral rearmament and spiritual redemption. The spirituality of these people owed a great deal to occultisms that had survived both the Reformation and the Atlantic crossing; their cosmologies rejected the reformers' optimistic millennium. Above all, perhaps, they despised the reformers' efforts to tamper with the scripturally ordained, father-centered family. Although Abzug nicely illuminates the high-church opposition to reformist evangelicalism, he overlooks what may in the long run have been the more important anti-reformers within the evangelical churches—the sorts of evangelicals who dimly augured today's religious right.

A harder look at American Baptists and Methodists would bring this sort of anti-reformist evangelicalism out of the shadows. So would an inclusion of the grim, apocalyptic cosmologies of men like William Miller (whose world-ending prophecies in the 1840s became the foundation for the Seventh-Day Adventist Church), or the Mormon prophet, Joseph Smith. It is necessary to explain how and why these seers rose and gained followers in the same cultural universe that produced Finney and Garrison, in order to place Abzug's reformers in full perspective—and in order to come to terms with why Yankee religious enthusiasms did not always lead to Yankee reform.

It is time for American historians to recognize the hidden prejudices of their secular imaginations. But that effort, skillfully provoked by Abzug, should not obscure those features of antebellum religion and reform that have yet to receive their due. And neither should nonbelieving intellectuals exchange their prejudices for a new set of platitudes about the sincere devotion of those touched by God. Considering religion seriously may mark a welcome change among liberal pundits and professors, but it will not provide the last word. For considering religion seriously is also a way of considering religion more critically.

SEAN WILENTZ is the author, with Paul E. Johnson, of *The Kingdom of Matthias*, which has just been published by Oxford University Press.

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WASHINGTON DIARIST

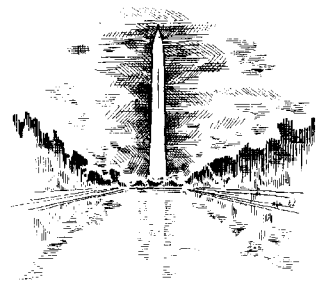
TLC

MY FATHER HAS BEEN DRIVING A taxi in New York City since 1973, when he left Tel Aviv to escape a dreary life as a trucker. As you can imagine, dreams of discovering gold-paved streets have been dulled by twenty years of potholes, heavy traffic at La Guardia, maniacal bike messengers and schemes to avoid tickets from the Taxi Limousine Commission, or TLC. Word has it that since the FBI caught TLC officials last year taking $100 bribes, which drivers stuck discreetly in their ashtrays during cab inspections, the commission's apparatchiks have become even more surly. Now they bust cabbies for anything—ripped seats, a dirty car, low air in the tires or "improper attire," meaning sandals or a tight undershirt.

DURING HIS TWENTY YEARS BEHIND the wheel, my father's world has been shaken up by changes in the industry. In the 1970s most drivers were Irish-Americans or Eastern European Jewish immigrants who owned their taxis or rented them by the year. They were secure in that no matter how much they drove, they'd have cash to bring home; individual owners kept all they earned, and renters paid 45 percent of what they made to benevolent bosses who, in turn, took care of gas, health care and vacations. Then, in 1979, the TLC upset the calm by allowing drivers to lease their cabs. My father has kept driving his own taxi, but most of his friends stopped years ago. Instead, they bought up medallions—cab licenses—and formed private companies. Now they sit in offices and rent cabs to other people, mostly young Pakistanis or Haitians, for an outrageous $90 per twelve-hour shift plus $20 for gas, turning each cab into its own private sweatshop. It takes a lot of work to make up that much money in half a day, so the competition for fares has become brutal. At times like these, I'm sure my father regrets having bought that one-way ticket to the Promised Land.

THE WORK DOES, HOWEVER, HAVE its glamorous moments. About ten years ago my father was hailed by Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis, who made small talk and told him she thought Israel was a beautiful country. Another time, Elliot Gould stammered a few words of Hebrew and confided that his real first name is *the same as my father's—Eliahu (his real* last name is Goldberg). Once, my father drove Macaulay Culkin to his posh private school ("Do you know who I am?" the brat huffed, flinging candy wrappers onto the front seat). Ray Charles, who got drunk in the back seat with his wife and son, left his champagne glass as a tip.

LIKE MY FATHER, I HAVE ALSO HAD chance encounters with fame. In my last job, as assistant to NEW REPUBLIC Senior Editor Michael Kinsley, I got close to George Stephanopoulos, Roger Altman, Tipper Gore and even the president. But unlike my father, I had no real contact. I only got to talk to their secretaries. Being thrown into the secretary subculture presented quite a challenge. You see, there are many different kinds of secretaries. My mother, for instance, is a real secretary: she works for a jewelry dealer in midtown Manhattan. She knows how to take dictation, process orders, manage the payroll and keep the boss's schedule. In Washington, there are real secretaries and there are assistants. They share some things in common: both, for example, prize loyalty above all else. Remember Fawn Hall? The aim is to challenge yourself daily to sacrifice your needs for the sake of the boss, right down to the last detail. If your boss doesn't want to speak to someone, you lie about his whereabouts. If your boss doesn't remember who someone is, you call that person and say you took an incomplete message. Most important, you slowly, if unconsciously, adopt your boss's personality. The secretary of one right-wing pundit was barely civil, addressing me only as Ms. Rosin in what I suspect was a fake British accent. I, meanwhile, tried to turn every interaction into a telephonic episode of "Crossfire": I was casual, sometimes belligerent and I always threw in a wisecrack.



BUT THERE ARE IMPORTANT DIFFerences between secretaries and assistants, and they often produce tension. Real secretaries perceived my informality as unprofessional. The wrath of important people hangs over their heads, so they didn't have time for my jokes. Will Mr. Kinsley keep his 7 p.m. appointment with *Washington Post* Chairwoman Katherine Graham? Mrs. Graham's secretary asked solemnly. I guess so, but I have no idea where he is. For security reasons, Roger Altman's secretary wanted Mike's birth date. That's easy. Did I know what he'd like to eat for lunch? she asked. Well, to start, he'd like confit of duck with a light plum sauce, then farfalle alla puttanesca and a crème brûlée for dessert. She didn't think this was funny. Once I had to track down a watch Mike had left at a hotel. Did I know what it looked like? the concierge asked. Well, no. All you found is a Bart Simpson watch? Yes, now I remember. That's the one.

FORTUNATELY, THE LIFE OF AN assistant is not all toil and servitude. As gatekeeper of phone calls and correspondence, I enjoyed a certain amount of power. If the Kurdish Relief Agency wanted its packet included in the afternoon mail, their press secretary would have to make pleasant small talk with me. Smitten female fans of Mike's, denied an audience for the third time would rage with jealousy at my access. But alas this all came to an abrupt end when I read in one of Mike's *Time* magazine columns called "My Failed Jobs Program," that my position would be retired. My mother, at least, was relieved she hadn't toiled all those years just so I could end up as someone's assistant.

TAKE MY PARENTS' EFFORTS TO ensure that my life would be easier than theirs, multiply them by 1 billion, and you have China. That's how it seemed on a recent trip to the PRC, where newfound wealth has combined with the country's one-child policy to produce a slew of fat happy boys. (Girls, alas, have not shared the riches; a preference for boys, facilitated by the latest in medical technology, has spawned a 3:2 ratio of unmarried boys to girls, which widens to a stunning 10:1 for singles over 30, according to the 1990 census). In Beijing's *hutongs*—or backalley housing compounds—plump, rosy-faced 10-year-olds, stuffed with the fruits of China's progress, play tag as their tiny mothers slave over steaming coals cooking dinner. Rail-thin parents wheeze on their bicycles as they wheel around their sons, whose chubby legs hang over the edge of the too-small children's seats designed at a time when pork was less plentiful. Food is not the only thing these kids have in abundance. The shelves of the Children's Toy Store in Shanghai are overflowing with train sets, tractors, Terminators and every kind of Matchbox car. But the fourteen female clerks at the store sit idly, waiting for customers. Where are all the pre-pubescent fatties? They're crowded around the latest toy—a Sega Genesis video game imported from Japan. With toys like these, who needs America?

HANNA ROSIN

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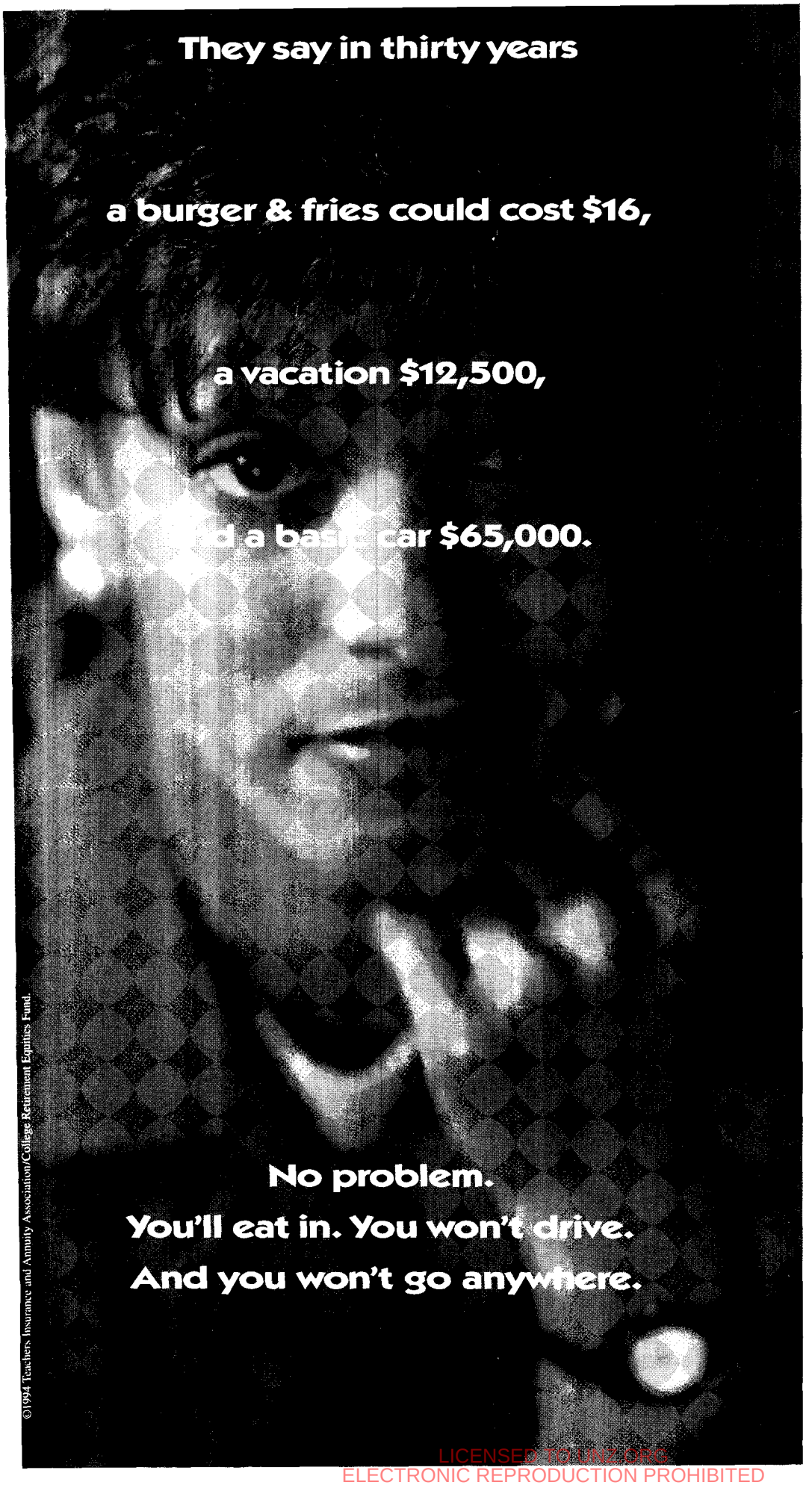
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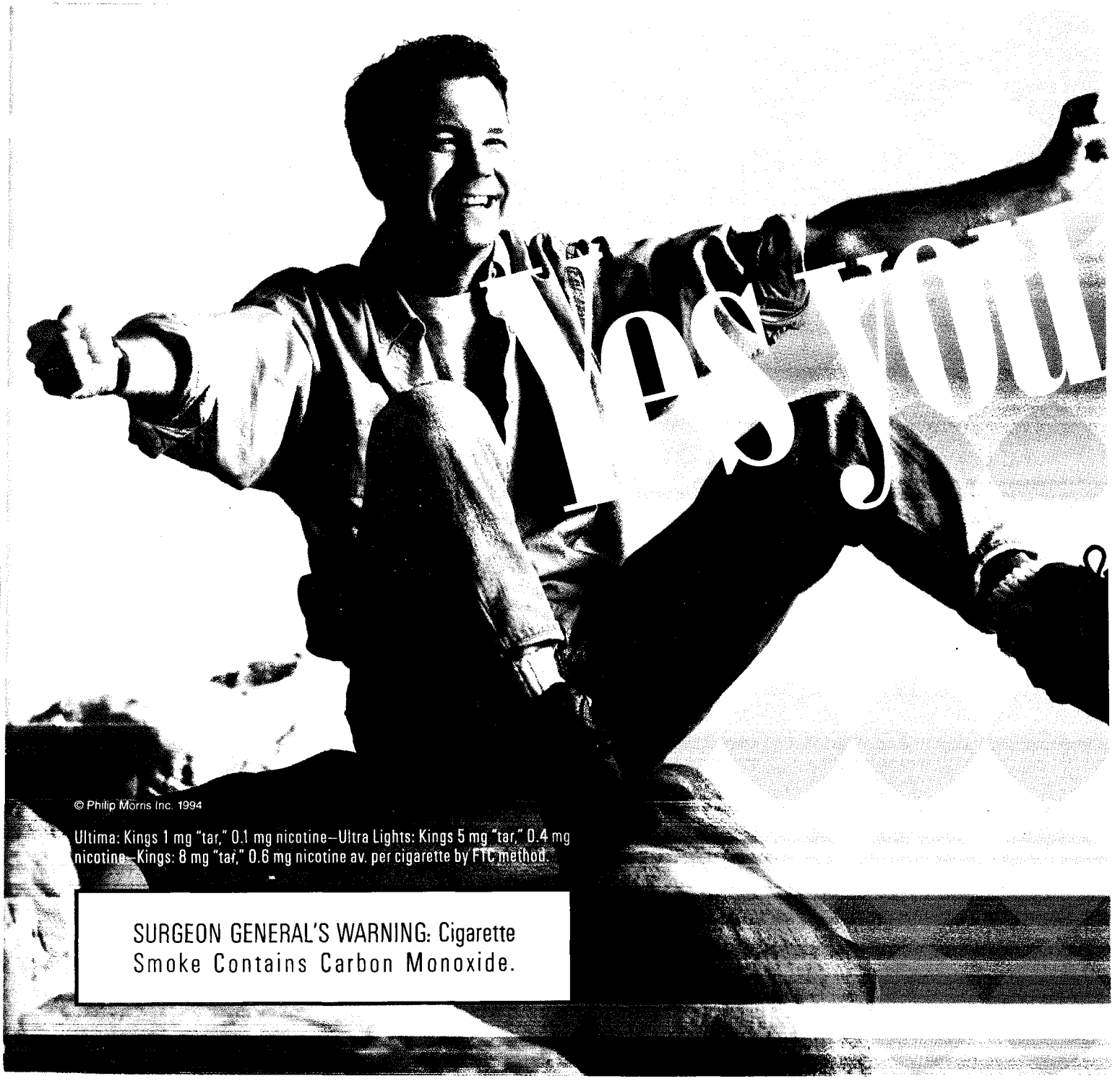

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Ultima: Kings 1 mg "tar," 0.1 mg nicotine–Ultra Lights: Kings 5 mg "tar," 0.4 mg nicotine–Kings: 8 mg "tar," 0.6 mg nicotine av. per cigarette by FTC method.

SURGEON GENERAL'S WARNING: Cigarette Smoke Contains Carbon Monoxide.

You can switch down to lower tar and still get satisfying taste.

Low Lower Lowest

You've got

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